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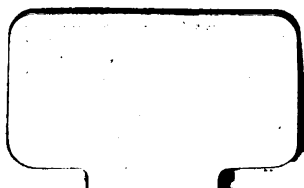
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THROUGH THE BREAKERS.

A Novel,

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

REV. RICHARD BULKELEY,

Vicar of S. John's, Dukinfield.

VOL. II.



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THROUGH THE BREAKERS.

CHAPTER I.

REGINALD A'BEAR followed his conductor, and soon found himself in the same room in which Forester and O'Connor had been examined on the previous day, and in the presence of the authorities, presided over by General ———, the Governor of the Academy. It was a painful position for all parties, more especially as General ——— had known his grandfather, Col. A'Bear, in former days ; indeed Reginald had been to his house occasionally during his two years sojourn at Woolhurst ; and as the old officer gazed at

the grandson of his friend and companion in arms, standing before him with downcast eyes, looking in his degradation as though he would have liked the earth to have opened and swallowed him up, a tear glistened for a moment in his eye. Recovering himself, however, immediately, he motioned the boy to a seat, for though it might be deeply painful to his feelings, he only knew of one word in such a case, and that was "*duty*." Indeed, the very fear of being suspected of favouritism, made his manner perhaps even sterner than usual.

"I need not," he began, "tell you the reason of your being brought before us this morning, you know it too well; and there is apparently no doubt whatever of your guiltiness in the matter. The statement which I have before me says that you fell down after the evening service, on Sunday last, in a state of such complete intoxication that you were unable to rise. I presume that you will not attempt to deny it?"

"No," answered Reginald, in a low but

distinct voice ; for now that the dreaded examination had really commenced, his courage was beginning to rise again.

“I am glad,” the governor continued, “to find that you do not attempt to prevaricate; and so make matters worse. I hope you may therefore be induced to tell the whole truth, how it was that you managed to get into such a state; for during the time that I have been governor here I never remember any cadet making a more public and worse exhibition of himself.”

Reginald at once commenced the painful recital of his temptation and fall, neither exaggerating his companions' guilt, nor lessening his own, and omitting nothing except the names; and a gleam of honest satisfaction passed over the face of O'Connor's compatriot as he noticed how exactly the account tallied with that which they had received the day before. When he began the same sad story, in a low but distinct voice, his eyes were cast upon the floor; but as the very act of confession seemed to take some part of

of the one in which they were sitting, and after a short consultation, determined that it was of no use to prolong his examination; and on their return, the governor addressing Reginald, said—"You will be glad to learn that there is no need for us to press you to give up the names of your companions, as one of them has most nobly come forward and confessed that it was he who tempted you on Sunday afternoon to enter a public-house. . . ."

Reginald heard no more. The exhortation which followed might as well have been left unsaid, for he only waited impatiently until it was finished, and then eagerly and earnestly exclaimed, "Oh, sir, please tell me who it was?"

"There can be no reason for keeping the name from him," urged the youngest lieutenant.

"Oh, no; none in the least," answered the senior officer, "the name is Charles O'Connor."

He was then dismissed, and was soon again in the cell, his mind harassed by a tumult of mingled feelings. He walked for some time impatiently, again and again, up and down the little room, for those words were still ringing in his ears, "the name is Charles O'Connor."

The estrangement of the past few months, and the part which his old friend had acted on the previous Sunday were all forgotten, and he was once again "the Charlie" of the first days of their friendship, who had now so nobly come forward, heedless of consequences, to save him. Oh, how bitterly he had wronged him by unjust suspicions at the very time, perhaps, when he was making his confession, sacrificing himself in order to save him. How he longed to see him, and tell all, and ask his forgiveness. Such was the nature of his self-accusations; for all the generous impulses of his own heart had been moved to their very source by the knowledge of O'Connor's noble and disinterested conduct. "I always knew

that he had a good heart at bottom," he said to himself, "there are not many fellows who would have done it; at any rate we shall always be friends again now." That thought seemed to do away with much of the misery of his situation; for while there is no sting more sharp than "friend remembered not," there are few joys more pure and real than to find that one for whom you have a real feeling of affection has proved that he reciprocates it by being a friend in need.

After a time, however, his thoughts turned back again upon himself and his own condition. "It is indeed hard," he thought, "that I should be treated as a drunkard, just for one offence, and my word doubted, too." What his sentence would be he hardly dared to contemplate. Possibly expulsion, but he hoped not. O'Connor's confession would surely save him at any rate from that. Still, several cadets had been lately dismissed, or obliged to be withdrawn from the Academy for exactly similar offences, and why should

he expect any better fate ? But then, again, this was the first serious offence since his entrance into Woolhurst, and that would tell in his favour ; and so he was sometimes full of hope, and sometimes full of despair, as either thought was uppermost in his mind.

O'Connor's feelings were much the same as his friend's during that oft-remembered week, for he longed to see him, and ask for his forgiveness. Still he had the satisfaction of knowing that, however much he might have been to blame in the first instance, he had done his best since to make amends, and felt that his honourable conduct had brought its own reward with it. His arrest sat upon him lightly enough, for although the having to turn out to drill at an early hour was not altogether pleasant, and the feeling of being obliged to stay in the same room was irksome and disagreeable, especially to one who had a keen love of freedom, and was impatient of restraint at any time ; yet, otherwise, it was not very burdensome. Any possible feelings

of loneliness were prevented by a constant succession of cadets who came to discuss with him A'Bear's probable fate; and his hopes were much raised when he found that it was the universal opinion that he would not be dismissed. At last the expected but dreaded day came, and on Friday morning the message was brought to Reginald that immediately after breakfast he was to be released, and that the letter from the Master of Ordnance would be read at the morning parade, immediately after class hours. He was, as may be supposed, but a short time over his breakfast, and after throwing the remainder on to the roof for the little comforter of his prison hours, found himself once again in the Quadrangle; and he thought that the blue sky above his head had never looked so blue before, nor the air felt so fresh, as it did that minute.

The other cadets had not yet come out from breakfast, and when he arrived at his own room, finding from the servant that

O'Connor was under arrest, and 'therefore would be unable to come to see him at once, after hastily brushing his clothes, made the best of his way over to the first division, and reached it just in time to avoid meeting the main body of cadets, who at that moment were leaving the hall.

O'Connor, not knowing that Reginald was waiting for him, walked slowly enough to his room, and was only less astonished than glad to find him waiting.

"Charlie!" "Reginald!" were all the words they could utter, as they clasped one another by the hand; and then, Reginald, who had thought over what he should say, exclaimed—

"Oh, Charlie, will you forgive me?"

"Forgive you?" broke in O'Connor, not allowing him to finish the sentence, "forgive you, for what I should like to know? No, it is I who need forgiveness—I, who was the tempter and did the devil's work."

"Ah, but you don't know," Reginald

quickly replied, "what unjust thoughts I had of you at the very moment, perhaps, when you were making your confession in order to save me."

"The wonder would have been, if you had thought any otherwise," he answered, "after my conduct during the last six months; and as to making a clean breast of it, that is no credit to me whatever, for if I had gone through such another twelve hours as I did on Sunday night, they would have had to have found a straight waistcoat for me before Tuesday morning."

Just then some other cadets came into the room, and for the next five minutes, as the news quickly spread, there was nothing for it but to endure much shaking of the hands, and many congratulations on his deliverance from durance vile; a second edition of which had to be undergone as soon as he had reached his own room again. But the two friends were very glad that no one had been present at their first interview, and that

they had thus been able to speak without reserve.

Friday was devoted to drawing, and though it was one of his favourite studies, but little progress was made by Reginald A'Bear. Drawing requires a steady hand, which he had not that morning, and whatever the reality of his sentence might be, he felt that it could not be much worse than the lingering torture of suspense beforehand.

At length the class was over, and with a heavy heart he left the room to get ready for the parade, and shortly afterwards was standing in the ranks of his company, on the ground just in front of the library. When the inspection was over, the words of command were given, "Form four deep ; to the right face," and then, company by company, the whole body of cadets were marched into the library, where they stood in the form of a hollow square, facing inwards, with the governor and other officers of the Academy in the centre. After a few moments of breathless

suspense, the names of A'Bear and O'Connor were called, and they came out of the ranks, and having saluted the governor, stood side by side in the centre of the room.

The words of General — before the report was read from the Master of the Ordnance were few, but to the point :—

“ The last time we met together here on a similar occasion, was, I am sorry to say, owing to a like offence, viz., drunkenness. We had hoped that the punishment then inflicted might have proved a sufficient warning to you all, but it seems not; and it has been a matter of deep concern and regret to the authorities to have another case brought before them so immediately; where, besides A'Bear and O'Connor, the evidence goes to prove that more of you were implicated in the matter. Now, I need hardly tell you, leaving alone all consideration of its sinfulness, that drunkenness is a glaring vice in the British army, and it is most necessary, therefore, that officers should set a good example

to their men in this respect. No man who cannot command himself, is fit to be an officer; for, until he has learnt to govern himself and have a proper respect for his own character, he is certainly not fitted to command the men under him, or to obtain their respect." And then, turning to the two boys, the old man continued, "It is very sad indeed, to see you, who are both the sons and grandsons of officers, brought before us on this occasion, more especially as one of you has hitherto obtained the highest character in the Academy, both for conduct and ability."

He paused a moment, and then addressing A'Bear more particularly, said—

"Still, we are very glad to find that though you have fallen in one way, you have not lost the principles of truth and honour, and this has made us hope that the lesson which you have now received may be a warning to you both for the rest of your life; and it is to this fact—the fact that you have told the truth in the matter, and to our belief that it is

your first offence of the sort, and to the honourable conduct of O'Connor in coming forward, that you owe the mitigation of your punishment, which would otherwise have been expulsion. And with regard to you, O'Connor, you have lately caused us much uneasiness, and, by your own confession, you were, in this instance, the tempter. Your confession, however, could only have been prompted by honourable motives, and gives us hopes that you may determine to act very differently for the future."

He then stepped back, and the captain coming forward, read the report from the Master of the Ordnance, concluding with the sentence of punishment:—

"That gentleman cadet, Reginald A'Bear, was to lose his rank of head of a room, to be sent home for the rest of the term, and on his return after Christmas was to take his place at the bottom of the class."

"That gentleman cadet, Charles Heffernan O'Connor was to be sent down to the bottom

of the class, to be under arrest for a month, and not to be allowed to go out of bounds for the remainder of the term."

Poor Reginald had buoyed himself up to hope for a more lenient sentence, and when he learnt that he would have to leave Woolhurst for a time, he turned deadly pale, and everything swam around him, while instinctively he took hold of O'Connor's arm for support. With the assistance of one of the lieutenants, O'Connor led him to a chair, opened his coat, and took off his stock; and when he came round again, which was almost immediately, the rest of the cadets were already marching out. O'Connor had soon to follow, but not before he had shaken Reginald once again by the hand, whispering at the same time—

"Never mind, old fellow, it will only be for a few months."

When he had gone, the old general came over to him, and now that his stern duties were passed, spoke kindly enough to the poor

boy, more especially as he saw how deeply the disgrace of his punishment had affected him. He said that he had received a letter from his uncle Ralph that morning, who would be at the Paddington station at five o'clock that same afternoon to meet him ; and tried to cheer him up by showing how very leniently the authorities had dealt with him ; that if he would be wise for the future, and would make the best use of his time whilst at home, there was no reason that his after position should be in the least affected by his punishment ; for although he would have to take his position at the bottom of the class at the commencement of the next term, he would have the same chance as any one else of coming out at the top of the list at the end.

Reginald thanked him, but it seemed at the same time very poor consolation. It was not the punishment itself or the loss of position which had affected him, but the disgrace ; to be sent down from the Academy

for drinking, and to be pointed out in the future as a drunkard (for of course he could not explain the whole matter to every one) was what he dreaded ; and all the way up to, and passing through London, forgetting what an insignificant unit he was amid its many thousands, it seemed that every one he met must know his history. However, there was nothing for it but to go and pack, which he commenced with a heavy heart, with the assistance and commiseration of the servant. When he passed the common, the cadets were going through evolutions with the guns. He looked at them for a moment, and then leant back in the cab for fear that any one should recognize him. At the station he met the young lieutenant who had been a member of the court of inquiry, and was walking on the platform with a friend. He at once came up to him and said—

“I am so glad to have met you, as I wish to say that I think both you and O'Connor have acted most nobly in the matter, most

nobly indeed; and I am sure that we need have no fear of either of you being ever engaged in any such affair again;" and those few words from the generous-minded and sympathizing young officer reached Reginald's heart.

At the Paddington station he found his uncle Ralph in a very angry state of mind, not with him, but with the authorities of Woolhurst, and thinking that "it was a great shame that they had acted so harshly (as he considered it) to his nephew. That they should either have believed O'Connor's confession or not—if they believed it, they should not have punished Reginald at all. Talk about discipline—discipline be hanged! discipline could never be improved by an act of injustice. It was absurd to treat a lad so harshly for one offence." Any thought of the sinfulness of the act or of his nephew's weakness and indecision in giving way to the temptation, was swallowed up in the feeling

of injustice, and Reginald found his aunt and cousins at Bath prepared to treat him as a highly injured individual.

Now, of course all this was highly injudicious, and might have done his character material harm; but Reginald himself was not satisfied, he felt sure that Mr. Maitland would speak to him very differently with regard to the matter. His own conscience, too, told him a different story. Even if the punishment might seem severe, it was through his own weakness that he had fallen; it was his carelessness and want of perseverance in the preceding term which had paved the way for his fall. It would have been no temptation he knew to Forester or Edric Maitland, nor to him either a year ago. Commiseration was not the consolation either that he wanted. His heart was still dead and cold; generally sanguine, he now felt almost hopeless of the future; though he had begun to pray again, his prayers were lifeless, they wanted faith;

he asked, but expected not to receive. It seemed as though God had passed by, and that it was useless for him to persevere any longer. Though he dreaded the meeting, he yet longed for a talk with Mr. Maitland, to open his heart to him, and so he took the opportunity of a letter from his grandmother, to hasten his departure to Burrscombe; more especially as his uncle, one of those men, who if they have anything on their minds cannot help talking about it, was continually expatiating on his wrongs to every one who came to the house. Perhaps he would have been more chary of his information, had he known what many of these worthy souls, who had agreed to all his assertions, said when they met at the card-table in the evening.

“It is all very well for his uncle to take his part, but he is evidently a most depraved young man.”

“Yes, and I am very glad my nephew is not here now, as he might have contaminated him,” charitably echoed a second.

“ Ah,” said another, rolling on the ball with a will, “ I knew the old colonel and his father well, both noble looking men,” and, then waiting a moment to sort her hand, added, “ a very sad disgrace indeed, but I suppose he must have taken after his mother, a poor weak thing.”

“ Yes,” shrieked the fourth, who was rather deaf, and had only caught the last few words, and thought that they were talking about another event, “ but what could you expect, such a bringing up ; might just as well have had no mother at all, always allowed to do just as she liked, but then what’s the world coming to, as I said to sister Ann, when we heard the news this morning.”

And so these four, in whom the milk of human kindness seemed dried up, settled to their own satisfaction, that poor Reginald’s fate was sealed, that he was naturally and irretrievably bad, and that there was little chance of any amendment ; and then com-

menced some other subject, which they discussed in an equally friendly, amiable and charitable spirit between the pauses of a rubber of long whist.

CHAPTER II.

WE will pass over Reginald's meeting with his dear old grannie, and will forgive her for being unable to think any evil of her darling boy, and for her conviction, not merely that he was more sinned against than sinning, but that it was altogether the fault of some one else.

"I wish he had never gone to Woolhurst at all, but had gone with Edric Maitland to Tiverton. I never wished it, and always had a presentiment that it was not for the best," said the old lady to Nanny one morning, as she informed her of the untoward event.

"I never did think any good of them wild Irishmen," answered Nanny, "and have

heard zome queer tales about 'em vrom Bristol volk. They be maizt daft, I reckon. Just as if it's likely, indeed, that Maizter Reginald would go for to do zuch a thing of hizzelf. It's just th' wicked and zeducing wayz they have wi 'em."

And that night, and each evening for many months afterwards, the waxen figure, which had been long laid aside, was brought out again, and a pin scrupulously and religiously fixed in it; the first through that spot where the heart should have been, as though, with the first stab, to take the life, or at any rate the powers of further mischief, out of the guilty individual.

And very thankful indeed was she that it had not been destroyed, as she had more than once intended, more especially as Reginald for the first week seemed in a very low and distressed state of mind. He moped all day in the house, and went out walking only of an evening. Indeed, he was getting into a very dangerous frame of mind; the

first stage in the ruined life of many another.

He had been at Burrscombe nearly a week, and Lorna had never been to see him; his worst anticipations were therefore realized, she was never to be allowed to speak to him again. Mr. Maitland even had not visited him; he was evidently, therefore, to be treated as an outcast, as one incapable of amendment. It seemed, like the last pound upon the camel's back, to crush him utterly to the ground. He took counsel with no one, but nursed his grief, or else he would have found that Mr. Maitland and Lorna were away from home, and would not return until Saturday; and when Sunday came, instead of going to church at Sandstone, he walked over the hills to Malborough, and returned home by the seaside.

As he was walking along, and feeling very miserable, who should he come across, but his old friend, Jabez Steer, fast asleep on a bank by the sea shore, just at the entrance to

Milton sands. His first thought was to pass him ; his second, to go and sit by his side, wake him, and have a chat.

Jabez Steer's principles with regard to church going were peculiar. No Sunday morning ever passed that did not see him in his accustomed seat at Sandstone church ; but if the bishop himself had preached in the afternoon he would hardly have been persuaded to go to hear him. When spoken to by Mr. Maitland on the subject, he had answered—

“I am much obliged to your reverence for the advice, but you see the great Creator has given us two books, the book of the Testaments and the book of Nature ; and He seems to speak to me almost as plainly in the one as the other. I go to church in the morning, pray to the Lord, and hear the Word read and explained, and much good your reverence often does me ; and then in the afternoon I read a page out of the other book, and listen to a sermon preached by the Almighty Him-

self, and with due respect to your reverence the afternoon sermon sometimes seems to do me more good than the morning; and the singing of the birds to the music of the waves are, with no disparagement to your lady's exertions, as fine an anthem as any sung by the choir of Sandstone."

On the afternoon in question, like many another who would have found fault with him for his principles, he had fallen asleep while listening to the sermon.

When Reginald awoke him, he rubbed his eyes for a moment, and as soon as he saw who it was, said—

"Young Mister A'Bear—and I hope that I see him with a *mens sana in corpore sano*, according to the Latins; for as Milton has said, 'the mind is its own place, and in itself can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.' You have found me napping, or 'in Bedfordshire,' as my old master used to say, when he awoke us up with a blow of the ferrule; but I was so tired, and the noise of

the waves so soothing, that I could have gone to sleep on a fuzzen faggot. But, sir, now I look at you again, 'the native hue of resolution seems sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought.' Can it be that you have already reached that stage depicted by the poet, when 'sighing like a furnace' — but then, noticing the pained expression on Reginald's face, he changed his manner and tone of voice, as he continued "but perhaps I am taking too great a freedom; still if my young master would like to pour the story of his griefs into the ear of an humble, but sympathizing friend, who has had some little experience of the battle of life, he will be glad to listen."

"Oh, no, you are taking no liberty at all," answered Reginald; "I am so glad to have met you, as I have not seen any one to talk to for a week. What you say about the mind is quite true, at any rate it can make a hell of earth," and he then told him—for he knew that notwithstanding his eccentricity, and

their different positions in life, he was a true and sincere friend—the story of his fall.

Jabez waited patiently to the end, and then said—

‘ I think my young master takes the matter too much to heart. The Lord says, “ I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgression, and as a cloud thy sin,” or else poor Jabez Steer would have been cast off long ago ; He has brought him through many troubles, and He will not leave you in the lurch either.”

After this, they had a long talk together, and, as soon as he conveniently could, without it being observed, Jabez, with a tact which many a man in a higher rank of life might have envied, changed the topic of conversation, so as to draw away Reginald’s thoughts from himself and his troubles ; and it was with a lighter heart than he had known for some days that he wended his way home across the fields ; more especially, as he had learnt that Mr. Maitland and Lorna had only arrived home on the previous Saturday.

But all his hopes were cruelly dashed to the ground next day. On Monday afternoon, after waiting at Burrscombe all the morning in case Mr. Maitland should call, he determined to go down to the parsonage to announce his arrival; more especially as his grandmother said to him, immediately after dinner—

“ Reggie, dear, why don’t you take a walk down to the vicarage? Mr. Maitland is at home, and I am sure will be very glad to see you.”

As he drew near to the house, his pace became slower and slower, and his heart beat quicker and quicker; and when he came to the gate leading into the vicarage garden, it beat faster still, and he paused irresolutely; for there, on a rustic seat close to the study window, was Lorna Maitland, looking more lovely than ever. She was sitting in the shade reading a book, her hat hanging on her arm, so that her golden hair, falling in luxurious confusion over her neck and shoulders, formed

a beautiful setting to her lovely features. Reggie stood motionless for a few minutes, hardly breathing for fear of disturbing her. It was getting on for a year since their last meeting, and he was astonished to see how much she had altered in that time. Her face, which used to be running over with mirth and happiness, seemed to have grown sadder and more pensive. It might be only that she was older, or it might have been caused by some incident in the book she was reading ; but the thought that it was possibly occasioned by sorrow and sympathy with him in his unhappiness, gave him courage to lift the latch.

“ She will never surely cast me off,” he said to himself, as he passed through the gate and walked down the drive towards her. The noise of the gate as it slung to made Lorna look up from her book, and, when she saw who it was, to start quickly to her feet. She paused a moment, as if irresolute ; Reginald quickened his pace. Imagine, then, his bitter

and crushing disappointment as he saw her turn and disappear within the house !

* * * * *

It was indeed the last drop in the bitter cup, and he turned and hastened from the place. He hurried on mechanically, his feet carrying him where they would. One word from her would have saved him from despair, but that she had refused to speak ; and now he felt reckless—he cared not what might become of him. That his little sister Lorna, as he had always called her, who scarcely more than a fortnight ago had written him an affectionate letter, should so soon have cast him off, was the last drop to fill up the measure of his despair. And so he rushed on in a whirlwind of mingled thought and passion ; but when at length he reached the cliffs, and sat down in the old and favourite spot where so many pleasant hours had been passed, owing to the very violence of his feelings a reaction set in, and for the first time

since his disgrace he fairly broke down, and wept long and convulsively, and after a time, when quite exhausted and overcome, he fell asleep.

He slept for some time, and did not awake till past five o'clock; and what was his astonishment when he suddenly awoke to find Lorna sitting by his side, and shading his eyes from the evening sun with her parasol.

Her first thought when she had seen him enter the garden had been to hasten to meet him, her second, prompted by a budding maiden bashfulness—she was just fifteen—to jump into the study, and tell her father that Reginald was coming.

Her father, who had intended going to see him that same afternoon, had at once risen with the intention of giving him a warm and cordial greeting, but to their astonishment when they stepped out on to the lawn, he was nowhere to be seen.

“Are you sure, my child, that you did not

make a mistake?" asked Mr. Maitland anxiously, "are you quite certain that it was Reginald?"

"Oh, yes, papa, quite certain. I could not have made a mistake."

"Well, it certainly is most strange," answered her father.

At this moment Lorna caught sight of Reginald as he was hastening down the road leading to the shore, and as she pointed out his retreating figure to her father, said sorrowfully and in a most miserable tone of voice, while a big tear appeared in the corner of either eye—"I know what it is, it all comes of thinking twice. Mamma tells me always to think twice, but it seems to me that I always make mistakes when I do. I was just going to him, when a second thought came into my mind of jumping into the study to tell you, and so he thinks I don't want to see him, and has gone away. Oh, papa, what shall I do?" And the young lady looked very sorrowful and miserable indeed.

Mr. Maitland stooped down and kissed her, and then said—"Where her feelings are concerned I think my little woman's first impulses are generally right. But as she thinks that it was her fault, suppose she goes as a little missionary and bring the wanderer back again. Poor fellow, he must indeed need comfort, if he thinks that we could cast him off. But here comes mamma, so let us ask her advice."

Lorna at once sprang towards her mother, and told her the whole history, and as Mrs. Maitland had always felt like a mother towards Reginald since he had first come as an orphan into the parish, she was much grieved at the occurrence, and quickly seconded her husband's proposal, so that before very long the little missionary was on her road to the cliff, with the full intention of not returning home without him. She guessed, and guessed rightly, where he would most likely to be found.

As we have seen, she discovered him asleep,

and after watching him for some time, had stooped down and softly wiped the traces of tears from his face ; and then sitting down gently by his side, had put up her parasol to shield him from the sun. And while she sat there the same thought entered her mind as had passed through his when he was watching her through the wicket, viz., how very much he had changed in appearance during the last few months ; and as she marked the traces of recent sorrow and suffering on his face, her affectionate heart was deeply grieved to think that, however unintentionally, she had added to the burden, and longed for the time when he should awake that she might explain everything. But on and on he slept, while she sat patiently by his side, only moving as the sun moved.

At last the barking of a shepherd's dog on the cliff above their heads aroused him, and when he opened his eyes, they were dazzled at first by the rays of the declining sun reflected from the dancing waters ; but becoming

almost immediately afterwards conscious that some one was sitting by his side, he turned round—their eyes met—and in a moment he understood all. “Lorna!” was the only word he could give utterance to—his tongue seemed tied to the roof of his mouth by the sudden and mingled emotions of astonishment and joy.

And then she told him everything—her joy when she had first seen him; that she had been sitting on the seat outside the study all the morning in the hopes of being the first to greet him; her sorrow when she found that he had gone again; her grief at having caused him pain, when she wished more than anything else to comfort him; and, then, that he was to go back with her to tea, as her father and mother wanted so much to see him, and make amends for the trouble she had caused by her mistake.

When she had finished, he said—“How will you ever forgive me for my ungenerous thoughts of you? I ought to have known that

my little sister would not have cast me off so easily. But, oh, Lorny, if you only knew what my feelings were when I saw you turn and go into the house, instead of coming to meet me. I seemed to hear something whisper in my ear like Job's temptress, 'Curse God and die;' and I turned and rushed away."

"Oh, Reggie," she answered, "I couldn't give you up; none of us ever thought of giving you up for a moment."

"I felt just as though it were of no use for me to try any more; that if your father would have nothing more to do with me, and had told you not to speak to me any more, I couldn't persevere—I must give in."

"But you won't think so any longer, now, will you?" said Lorna, pleadingly, "You will go on and persevere; I wanted to see you so much. I wanted to remind you so much of what papa said in the sermon just before you went away for the first time. It seems such a long time ago, but I remember it all quite well."

"Yes," he answered, "I have often thought about it, too; and many, many times, in the last few years. But Lorny, you don't know, you never could know, how I have been tempted. I have tried and tried again; but, the more and more I tried the worse the temptations seemed to grow; and, then, at last to fall so low—just, too, when I was beginning to persevere afresh all the harder." And he buried his head in his hands as he exclaimed, "It is useless for me to try any more, I seem to believe in nothing, to hope for nothing, and to feel as though it were of no use even to pray to God any more."

"Oh, no, dear Reggie," she pleaded, as she laid her little hand upon his arm, "you mustn't say that; you musn't think so. Remember, papa said that we were to persevere in spite of our coldness, in spite of our sins. If we won't give you up, you may be sure that God won't either. You will go on trying; you won't give in?"—and, then, as Reginald remained in the same position without moving,

after pausing a moment, she said again,

“Dear Reggie, you won’t give in, you’ll try again?”

But still he did not answer, and the loving pleader, feeling her helplessness, in her extremity sent up a petition to the King of kings.

At length, he sprang up, her pleading voice had been like David’s harp, and, looking at her eagerly and earnestly as she was sitting on the grassy slope just above him, said—

“Lorny! — Lorny! — will you promise never to give me up?”

“Oh, yes!” she answered immediately. “I could not give you up; none of us could ever give you up.”

“Then, I’ll try again,” he said, “I won’t give in.”

He sat down again, and they both continued for a while in thought, without speaking. At last, Lorna broke the silence—

“Had we not better go home now, as it must be getting near tea-time?”

"But when is tea-time?" he answered, taking out his watch.

"At half-past six."

"Then don't you think that we might sit a little longer, as it is only now about half-past five, and I want to tell you all that has taken place during the last month."

She willingly consented, and as he told her the story of the past few weeks—the temptation—his feelings in the black hole—the examination — O'Connor's confession — the robin's song—they sat together once again as they had often done in days gone by, both feeling very happy, although the largest measure of happiness fell to Reginald's share, owing to his previous sorrow. And, while he played as he used with her golden locks, her bright blue eyes spake more eloquently than words her true and loving sympathy.

When he had finished the recital, they rose to return to Sandstone; but Reginald A'Bear was a changed being—aye, and he had very different feelings in the heart to any he had

experienced for many a long day. The crisis of his life was passed. He had many another experience to go through before what Jabez Steer had called the battle of life was fought out, but never again was the vessel so nearly breaking from her moorings. As in the case of the ill-fated "Cadmus," the anchor had dragged, and the ship had drifted; but unlike her, at length firm holding ground had been reached, and the anchor had taken better grip than ever; and though the winds might blow, and the waves might rise, she would weather every storm, until the time should come for her to seek the harbour of eternal refuge.

We hear much now-a-days about women's rights, the equality of the sexes, and so on; but it seems strange that the right of being the heart of humanity should not satisfy. The heart is a not less important organ of the human body than the brain; they are the two centres of life within us, and when they are both doing their part, there is harmony, there is health. Man is to be "*the head of*

the woman;" let woman determine to be the "*heart of the man.*" If man's part in the economy of the world be to reason, to think, to govern; let theirs, whatever they be—mothers, wives, sisters, lovers or friends—be to inspire the heart, to influence the affections. If man's method be to reach the heart by convincing the head; let theirs be to reach the head by influencing the heart. Few of them can aspire to be the brain of the world. If they can, well and good. But let them beware lest in striving after the one they should lose the other; lest what they may gain in brain, they should lose in heart—and the world, less now than ever, in these hard, hardening times, can do without its women's hearts.

* * * * *

They reached Sandstone Vicarage shortly before tea-time, and found the urn steaming away, and what in Devonshire is called "a high tea" waiting upon the table; and soon,

very soon, Reginald had almost forgotten his previous trials in their affectionate greeting.

“Haven’t I been a good missionary, papa?” whispered Lorna to her father as she gave him a kiss before proceeding to her seat. A squeeze of the hand, and a kiss in return, was her answer; and the little lady felt very happy indeed as she sat and listened to the conversation which as long as tea lasted was about anything but Reginald himself and his troubles. But, as soon as the tea-things were removed, Mrs. Maitland took Lorna into the drawing room, leaving her husband and Reginald together; and very soon the boy was pouring the whole history of his Woolhurst life into the ears of his attentive listener, who more than once, as he listened, shuddered, and thanked God that his own boy Edric had never been exposed to such temptations.

When Reginald had brought the recital to an end, he said affectionately—

“My poor boy, you have indeed been

tempted ; your experience of the world, and its trials, and its sins, has come to you pretty early in life, but if by God's grace you weather the storm it will not have been too dearly bought. I had heard something of Woolhurst doings, but had no idea that such things as you have alluded to were going on to the extent you mention. Many and many a life which might have been an honour to God, and a blessing to society, must have been wrecked amid its shoals. Why, I would sooner my right hand should be cut off than that Edric should be exposed to the contamination of such temptations at his time of life. But we must make the best use of your time whilst you are down here, and see if we cannot send you back after Christmas more fit for the battle. Perhaps, though, as we shall have many more opportunities for conversation, we had better join Mrs. Maitland and Lorna, as your nerves have evidently been much shaken, and will take some time in getting into their

normal condition again." He rose to go, but seeing that Reginald was hesitating, he said, "But, perhaps, you would like to continue talking for a little longer?"

"Oh, no," he answered, "but would you—would you mind kneeling down and praying for me? for I don't seem to be able to pray properly for myself; indeed I don't think I have really prayed for almost a year."

"I should have thought of that myself," Mr. Maitland replied, and kneeling down, after a brief silence, he prayed in a few earnest words "that strength might be given him to persevere; and to manfully fight under Heaven's banner against sin, the world, and the devil, and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end."

A short time afterwards Reginald took leave of his kind friends, and it was with the blessing of that peace which the world cannot give, that he laid his head to rest that night upon the pillow.

CHAPTER III.

THREE-FOURTHS of a year had passed away since the events narrated in the preceding chapter had taken place. It was somewhere about the middle of June, and Edric Maitland, his sister and Reginald A'Bear were sitting in the old dining-room at Burrscombe, evidently in a state of expectation; while their abundant supply of provisions on the table showed that a considerable increase of their party was looked for. Indeed they were anxiously awaiting the arrival of Charles O'Connor, who, instead of going to Galway, was about to spend his summer vacation at Burrscombe, and had joined at Bath a party of Reginald's cousins; Hugh A'Bear who

was about his own age, his sister Winifred, and Gertrude Sinclair, the one a little older, and the other a little younger than Lorna, who, never having had any companions of her own age and sex, was anticipating much pleasure from their visit.

Reginald had never returned to Woolhurst. Long before the time came to go back, he had fully made up his mind on the subject, but before mentioning it to Mr. Maitland, or his uncle, had waited a month in order to be fully convinced in his own mind on the matter, but each day seemed only to strengthen his lately formed resolution.

He felt that his life at Woolhurst had been a failure, and dreaded to return thither with the ban of drunkenness upon him, and under the loss of his good conduct stripes, his position as head of a room, and the degradation of having to sit for a term at the bottom of the class.

Moreover—and this was perhaps the real

reason—removed from the temptations and associations of Woolhurst, his conscience, in the purer atmosphere of home life, was beginning to assume her old sovereignty, and to show him in its right light the nature of his conduct during the past year. His fall, too, had made him lose all confidence in himself, and he feared what the consequences might be of another plunge into the ever-increasing temptations which would beset him in his life as a cadet, and afterwards as a young officer. Had there been a war going on at the time, he would not have thought of leaving, lest any should accuse him of cowardice—forgetting, the while, that the step which he was about to take showed that, as far as the return to Woolhurst was concerned, he wanted moral courage. But England had been at peace with all the nations on the Continent for nearly forty years, and as far as appearances went it seemed likely enough that peace would continue to the end of the century. His Woolhurst life also, with its unhappy

termination, had in a measure dis-illusioned him of the glories of a soldier's life, and while he had no intention of being idle, he thought that he could do his duty, and serve his country as well in some other capacity.

Years before, when he had fallen from Silver-tail in the park at Bearcroft, during the first days of his riding lessons, his father had ran and picked him up, and notwithstanding his tears, a cut lip and a bleeding knee, had quickly put him into the saddle again, and with a crack of the whip had set the pony off at a sharp trot; and had he been still alive would doubtless have acted in much about the same way now, but his indulgent uncle, after a short and feeble opposition, had given in.

As may be supposed, Forester, O'Connor, and many of his old Woolhurst friends were in a sad state of mind when they heard of his resolve, and did all they could by letter and expostulation to persuade him to alter his decision. But as nothing increases more

rapidly at the rate of arithmetical progression than obstinacy, especially if we can persuade ourselves into the belief that it is determination, and that our decision has been adopted from the severest principles of duty, Reginald was only rendered all the firmer in his purpose by their arguments.

He had now been for about six months with a private tutor at Eastbourne, in Sussex, and was studying with the intention of going eventually to Oxford ; for although the mathematical training which he had received at Woolhurst would have been a better preparation for the Cambridge course, the fact that Edric Maitland was going to Oxford had decided him in the choice of a university, and he had two years before him to make up for lost time.

“As I shall not be coming home for another year,” said Reginald, “and perhaps for two, as Mr. Mapeley is talking of going abroad if he can get another pupil, I intend to make the most of this vacation, as it will be a sort

of end of one's boyhood. I do hope that the weather will be fine, and we musn't waste a day. I intend that Charlie shall go away with the impression that there is something better in Devonshire than cider and Devonshire cream, as he had the impudence to say in his last letter—wait till he's seen you—ay, Miss Lorny?"

"Don't talk nonsense, Reggie, but tell me what he's like?"

"Well, you know that I have not seen him now for nearly a year. Let me see, I suppose you want to know the colour of his eyes and the shape of his nose, to begin with. He has a good enough sort of a nose, but I am not certain about the shape, but it's one that he can follow; as to his eyes, I don't think that I ever noticed their colour particularly; his height is something between Edric's and mine, and he has fine curly brown hair, unless it has gone out of curl from grief at being separated from me for so long a time. I won't say any more for fear of raising your anticipations.

too high. I can promise you one thing, however, that none of us are likely to die of doleful dumps as long as Master Charlie is in the neighbourhood."

"I am certain that I shan't like him," said Lorna decisively, "I like people either with quite dark hair, or quite fair, nearly every one has brown hair."

"That is a woman's reason, and no mistake," said Edric, laughing, "nothing can be said against it; it's conclusive;" while Reginald joined in the laugh, and added—

"Why, Lorny, you are as bad as Nanny. She thinks that a wild Irishman is some sort of unclean beast that ought never to be allowed to go about without a keeper, and quite expects that we shall all be gobbled up before the week is out."

"I don't mind a bit about your laughing, but I am sure that I shan't like him," she answered.

"Ah, I know what it is," he rejoined. "You have never forgiven him for being the cause

of my troubles, but you must forget all about that, and no one could have acted more nobly at the last."

"Oh, no, it is not exactly that—but—

"The reason why I cannot tell,
But I shall not like thee Dr. Fell,"

chimed in her brother; "but while we are upon the subject let us hear what the others are like."

"I haven't seen so very much of Hugh, as he has been away in Germany, but he is rather like me in appearance, and Uncle Ralph thinks that he is the cleverest in the family, and expects him to do great things some day. As he has black eyes and hair like your humble servant, of course, I expect to see Lorny, according to her last statement, take a great fancy to him. Winny and Gerty are two merry girls, much about Lorny's age; Winny is dark, and Gerty is fair, and as they have had to behave themselves at Bath, to turn their toes out, and keep their elbows in,

I expect they will go pretty nearly wild here."

There was no time for more discussion, as almost immediately afterwards the carriage drove up, and before many minutes were over a merry party were sitting around the table; not the least joyous being the old grandmother, who was never more happy than when she was watching a number of young people enjoying themselves, which they were all evidently inclined to do on the occasion, although for a short time the conversation was a little constrained.

After a while, however, when the tea was drawing to a close, Reginald said, during a pause in the conversation—

"I don't see at all why I should be the only privileged person among you, able to call you all by your Christian names; and we shall certainly never get on properly if it is to be Mr. Edric and Miss Lorna, Mr. A'Bear, Miss Winnifred, Miss Gertrude, and as for friend

Charlie here, I see he is rapidly losing his identity altogether ; so I propose that you all put yourselves on the same footing as this most highly privileged individual."

"Being thus appealed to by my friend in the chair," answered O'Connor, evidently jumping at the proposal, "I can only say that I shall be delighted, if the ladies have no objection ; but I wished to show at starting that though I have come from the wilds of the West, I was not altogether a man of the woods, but had been to that particular hedge-school where they pay twopence extra to learn manners."

"What do you think?" said Winnifred, appealing to her grandmother ; for, as the eldest young lady present, she felt it was her duty to make a show of playing Miss Propriety.

"I should certainly advise you all to adopt Reginald's proposal," replied the old lady, "as it will make everything so much more pleasant and easy, and I suppose you wish to get rid of all formality as quickly as possible."

It took, however, a few days before the Mr. and Miss were finally disposed of, Hugh, who was the eldest and most matter-of-fact of the party, being the last to give them up.

After tea, Hugh proposed a bathe in the sea, and the four young men started for the beach, whilst Lorna took Winny and her sister to the vicarage to introduce them to her father and mother, and before the evening was over the young ladies, at any rate, had sworn an eternal friendship. It would be useless to attempt a full description of the way those six weeks were passed. It was the most lovely weather. According to the proverb—

“A dry May and a dripping June,
Brings all things into tune.”

So had been the season immediately preceding their arrival. May had shown the truth of that other Midland Counties’ proverb—

“If May be early, or May be late,
The wind ’all blow, and the cows ’all quake,”

For there had been some sharp frosts of a

night, even up to the last week of the month, but with the advent of June had come a change of weather, and there had been an almost incessant downpour of rain, accompanied with heavy thunderstorms for the first three weeks, when the weather seemed to settle and give signs of summer at last — better late than never.

According to their cousin's prophecy, Winny and Gerty, but especially the latter, went almost wild; and reckless of freckles, and other disagreeable dermatine consequences, gloves and parasols were for the time discarded, as it was useless to attempt to clamber over rocks, and pick up shells and seaweed with such unnatural and unnecessary encumbrances. Winny, who was nearly seventeen, and was to come out at Bath during the winter, confided to Lorna that although she was looking forward to it for some reasons, yet she would have liked much to have been going to have stayed at Burrscombe for another year; while Lorna, on the other hand,

thought that she would have liked to have gone to Bath for a bit; and Gerty Sinclair, who was a ward of Reginald's uncle, and as bonny and winsome a little woman of fifteen as could be found in a day's journey, told her great aunt that she would like to stay at Burrscombe always, it was so much more romantic than Bath. There was another reason, too, which however she kept to herself, and that was because Reginald was, and always had been, her favourite cousin—although indeed the cousinship was rather distant—and the hero of her romantic little heart, and she was never so happy as when she was doing something for him. Indeed, for that matter, she was one of those most unselfish beings who are always ready to do a kind act for any one, and are sometimes rather put upon in consequence.

A four-oared boat had been procured from Salcombe, the negro Sambo, who had suddenly appeared on the scene, after a three years' voyage, being appointed boatswain for the

vacation, and many a pleasant hour did they spend in "The Lorna," as she was named by acclamation. There was not a place that they did not visit, until they knew every nook and cranny in the neighbourhood almost as well as old Nix Jarvis himself.

Mr. and Mrs. Maitland sometimes joined in their excursions, and what with an occasional cricket match on the meadow by the sea ; sea fishing, and trout fishing in the Avon ; glee singing of an evening ; pic-nics here, there, and everywhere ; excursions to bold Bolthead, Slapton Lea, with its curious combination of sea and lake ; to Plymouth breakwater, docks, and beautiful Mount Edgcumbe ; a journey down the lovely Dart ; a trip to the Eddystone lighthouse, in which the ladies would not join, thinking discretion the better part of valour ; and above all a tour over Dartmoor, under the guidance of Mr. Maitland, the weeks passed so rapidly, that, as Gerty said—"They only seemed like days."

The Dartmoor tour was the great event ;

for making the little inn at Princes Town their head-quarters, each day borrowing some of the stout moor ponies, they rode to see some interesting spot or other ; and especially did they enjoy the pic-nic amidst the strange and romantic ruins, or rather vestiges of British Town, with that most extraordinary of old forests " Whistman's Wood," and the other Druidical remains, which, in their way, are almost as interesting as Stonehenge. They all agreed, however, that the tour would not have been nearly so interesting if it had not been for Mr. Maitland's clear explanation of everything they saw.

CHAPTER IV.

At length that most disagreeable of times, the last evening of the last day came, and after tea, with one consent, they sauntered down from Sandstone to the favourite nook by the sea-side, and sat down to enjoy a final sea-breeze. It was very quiet and lovely, and the sun was just beginning to think about setting. They were not a very merry party, however, and even Charlie O'Connor's somewhat spasmodic efforts at hilarity were anything but successful.

"Now, infidel; I have thee on the hip! 'according to the poet,' as Jabez Steer would say," suddenly remarked Reginald, addressing O'Connor. "Confess, an thou would'st have mercy."

“What do you mean?” he answered. “What is my offence? I appeal to the ladies for protection.”

“As you have appealed to the ladies, they shall be your judges. What do you think? Master Charlie here wrote to me, the week before he came, accepting the invitation, but saying at the same time that he did not expect there was anything in Devonshire worth seeing or having, except cider and Devonshire cream; and I am particularly anxious to know if he is of the same opinion still?”

“That is the unkindest cut of all,” said the culprit, assuming a most lugubrious expression of countenance. “What’s become of all the milk of human kindness?” and then, shaking his head, he continued, “oh Reggie, Reggie, I had thought better things of you; what an unfeeling monster you must be to remind an unfortunate fellow creature at such a time of his former delinquencies. I was low enough before, but now”—and he laid his hand upon his heart,

but immediately afterwards began to search about for something he had lost. He looked in all his pockets, turned them inside out, and then, after examining the grass on either side of him, said—"Yes, it's gone; gone for good, too, I'm afraid."

"What is it?" they all exclaimed, and began to look about them. "Your watch?"

"Oh, no, something much worse."

"Your purse, then?"

"Oh, no, something much worse—it's my heart," he exclaimed with a deep sigh.

At this there was a burst of laughter, and as soon as it had somewhat ceased, O'Connor said—

"I'll throw myself on the mercy of the court, and confess that Devonshire is the finest county in England—except Galway, of course," he added, after a pause.

"A bull, a bull," they all exclaimed, laughing louder than ever, in which, after a bit, O'Connor joined heartily.

This seemed to put a little more life into

the party, and before returning home, whilst the sun was setting they sang several glees, amongst which were : " Ye spotted snakes ; " " Awake æolian lyre ; " " Crabbed age and youth ; " and " Sigh no more ladies," the last word of the line " men are deceivers ever " being, by mutual consent, changed into " never," all agreeing, except Hugh, who persistently stuck to the original, and as soon as it was finished, commenced—

" Out upon it. I have loved
Three whole days together ;
And am like to love three more,
If it prove fine weather.

" Time shall moult away his wings,
Ere he shall discover,
In the whole wide world again,
Such a constant lover."

" Well, if you are not a disgrace to your sex," said O'Connor, while Reginald told Gerty to warn the young ladies of Bath of her brother's professed inconstancy.

" When shall we seven meet again ? " asked Edric Maitland of Winnifred, as he was helping her over the rocks on the way home.

"Never, perhaps," she answered, "or not until we are all staid old men and women. What Gerty says is quite true—the weeks have only seemed like days, and the days like hours."

They did meet, however, long before that time, but under very altered circumstances.

That same evening, as Reginald and his old friend Charlie were preparing to undress, the former observed—

"I say, old fellow, you don't mind my asking the question, but I fancy that you have something on your mind which troubles you; and I need hardly tell you that if it would be any relief to you to tell me, I shall be delighted to listen; and if I can help you in any way, nothing would give me greater pleasure."

Now Charlie who was rather older than Reginald, getting on for eighteen, had fallen desperately in love with Lorna Maitland; but as he never remembered the time when he had not been in much about the same condi-

tion, it did not trouble him so very much. He supposed that he would have to fall out of it again as quickly as possible, although he was afraid that it would not be such an easy matter. At the same time he had a real trouble, which the quick eyes of his friend had enabled him to discover, owing to the fact that somehow or other he had managed to get into old Pluckem's debt to the tune of some fifty odd pounds. So, after thinking for a moment or two, he answered—

“I should not have thought of bothering you about my troubles, but as you have asked me, I'll tell you all about it. It is just this : I owe old Pluckem rather more than fifty pounds, which, likely enough, unless I pay him off at once, will be sixty by Christmas. A year ago I should not have thought so very much about it ; but now it troubles me a good deal. When I go down to the Arsenal at Christmas, I shall have to sign a paper, as you know, certifying that I have no debts. Some fellows sign who owe a lot of money ;

but I feel that I could not do that now. Besides which, I begin to see very clearly that unless I put a stop to it at once, the old heathen will ruin me in the end as he has many another. You see, Reggie, that I am very different in many ways to what I was a year ago. I have never forgotten that night when you were in the black hole; I really begin to wish to do what is right, and these feelings seem to have grown so much stronger since I have been here; you live in quite a different atmosphere to any that I have been accustomed to. My father, as you know, is a poor man; he has a good estate, but it descended to him heavily mortgaged, though he is gradually paying it off, and he has had in consequence some difficulty in educating us. My education has been always paid by my mother's old bachelor brother; it is after him I am called Heffernan; and if he only knew that I was in debt, he would never do anything more for me, and would cut me off with a

shilling. There, I feel better already for having unburdened my mind to somebody."

"Don't let it trouble you any more," Reginald replied, "my uncle makes me a very handsome allowance, far more than I know what to do with. I should think I have now more than thirty pounds in my desk, and I shall be able to let you have the whole fifty before another month is over, as I have not had my last quarter's allowance yet. And you can't think how glad you have made me to hear what you say about yourself. It does indeed make up for a great deal to know that my misfortunes have done good to my old friend Charlie O'Connor."

"I'll not say 'no,'" O'Connor answered, "if you are sure it won't inconvenience you, but shall consider it as a loan to be repaid at the earliest opportunity."

"I can assure you it won't inconvenience me at all. And, Charlie, you'll not have anything more to do with old Pluckem, or any like him?"

“No, trust me for that; this child having once burnt his fingers in the fire, won’t go near it again in a hurry. I’m going to have Sloane’s old room next term, and intend to try and rise to the responsibilities of the position as corporal of the fifth division, and see if I can’t set the youngsters a good example.” As may be supposed when the two friends shook hands with one another next day at the Ivy-bridge station, they felt that their friendship had cemented firmer than ever.

Edric Maitland accompanied O’Connor and Reginald’s cousin as far as the Tiverton junction station on his way back to the Tiverton Grammar School, where he expected to stay for another year or year and a half; and hoped eventually to win the Baliol scholarship, the blue ribbon of the place, which it was generally expected he would carry off, as he was already nearly head of the school. The evening before he had told his sister that Winnifred A’Bear was the only

girl with any sense that he had ever met in his life, and as there was a certain sympathy of ideas between them on the subject, the parting at the junction was rather affectionate than otherwise, as he was reminded of his promise to accompany Lorna on a visit to Landsdown Crescent in the winter. Winny had to endure much chaffing from her sarcastic brother on her unusual silence during the rest of the journey, which she treated with lofty disdain; being apparently deeply engrossed in the life of "Lewis Arundle," which she had commenced on the way down, but had never yet found time to finish.

Reginald intended to leave for Eastbourne on the following day, but he had been so busy in attending to his guests that he had not been able to find time to pack, besides which he wanted to spend one quiet evening with his dear old granny before going away for what was likely to be such a long absence.

As he was driving Lorna back from the station after they had left, he said—

"I've got an accusation to bring against you, too, Miss Lorny. Do you remember what you said about Charlie O'Connor just before the carriage drove up when they first came?"

"You can't think," she answered, "how frightened I was yesterday, when you were asking him if he had changed his mind about Devonshire, lest you should attack me next."

"I did think about it," he replied, "but you looked so helpless, that I was obliged to be merciful; I could see by your face that you were expecting it every moment. I am certain that it was several times on Eddy's lips, too; but I think your blushes saved you. But confess, now, that you have changed your mind?"

"Of course I have. I should think that no one could help liking him, he is so merry and kindhearted; I have often thought since, what a very foolish remark it was."

Reginald A'Bear was up with the cock-crow next morning, and having packed his

clothes, went down to have a bathe in the favourite cove. When he had dressed himself again, as it was still very early, he sat down on a rock, and determined to stay there and enjoy the cool morning air and fresh breeze, until his watch showed him it was breakfast time. His seat was a rock covered with limpets and barnacles that would soon be washed again by the tide which was rising rapidly; and as he sat, without any apparent effort of the will, his thoughts seemed spontaneously to fix themselves upon himself—what had been, what was to be. He looked backward upon his past life with its strange vicissitudes, and then tried to look forward; but he was no prophet—the future was a blank.

“Perhaps it is just as well that we cannot anticipate with certainty,” he thought; “future pleasures might indeed be increased if we could be more certain of them, but certainty would do away with hope, and to be able to hope is in itself a pleasure; and who

could endure the slow torture of long, lingering despair beforehand? No, it is much the best as it is."

Before rising to return, he gazed on each feature of the well-known scene around him, and as his eye lighted on the spot where he had sat and talked with Lorna, he remembered how surprised, and yet how glad, he had been to discover her sitting by his side.

"Yes, she has been indeed my guardian angel, and no mistake; dear little Lorny!" he said to himself.

But what has suddenly made him pause, and gaze so intently at the spot, as a strange thrill of before unknown happiness passed through him, while the blood rushed from the heart in an impetuous torrent through every artery to be only returned again as quickly by the veins? Why it seemed to come upon him that moment, as a revelation, that he loved her. He had always loved his little sister Lorny, but this was a new experience altogether—this was something different to a

brother's love. He wondered that it had never dawned upon him before, but he could see how it had gradually grown from the first day he had met her, until it had thus suddenly flashed upon him, and he felt intensely happy. He never thought of telling her, for he was not yet eighteen, and she was only sixteen; but that she would return it some day he never doubted for a moment; and when he left the place, he felt that the future was a blank no longer, and thought, "I shall have something to work for now; I shall have a real object in life, and will make myself worthy of her." Aye, Tennyson never wrote truer words than those where, in the "Idyls of the King," he speaks of the effect of a true and pure affection on the heart.

* * * * *

At the base of the rock on which he was sitting, was a small pool or rocky basin, the sides of which were fringed with the most delicate mosses and seaweeds, and the bottom

studded with the most brilliant sea anemones, while a solitary prawn and little fish kept darting hither and thither. "A very bath for a Pixie," he thought, and stooped down to examine it more closely, and what was his astonishment to see one of the anemones, the most beautiful of the group, of a most lovely green, whose tentacles were tipped with the most delicate rose-colour, suddenly seize upon the unfortunate prawn and commence to swallow it. He had heard before of the voracity of these sea-flowers from Jabez Steer, but had never been witness of so strange a scene, and could not help wishing that the destroyer had been a little less beautiful.

"What a horrid omen!" he said, half laughingly, half seriously, as he turned away from the place, and began making his way up the cliff.

After breakfast, as there was about an hour before the time for starting, he walked down to the vicarage to say farewell, and when he

saw Lorna, his heart told him again that his morning's thought was no fiction of the imagination merely. As she was saying "Good-bye," he asked her if she would not walk up with him to Burrscombe, and console his grandmother for a while after he had left. She gladly consented, and quickly slipping on her cloak and hat, accompanied him.

Shortly afterwards they were standing in the hall, whilst Reginald's things were being put into the dogcart at the back door. He felt that he must say something before he left, but what, he knew not.

"Lorny," he said at length, as they were standing hand in hand, "I may be away for some time—two or three years, perhaps ; and you won't forget me before I come back ?"

"Oh, no ; you know I never could," she quickly answered.

"We shall be boys and girls no longer then, but men and women."

"Yes, I know," she replied, "but I shan't be a bit different."

The sound of the wheels in the yard, told him that the dogcart was driving round to the front door ; he only had another minute, so stooping down, he asked—

“Will my little sister give me one kiss before I go ?”

She did not answer, but lifted her face ; he looked into her swimming eyes for a moment, their lips met—before the minute had flown he had hold of the reins, and in another the horse was trotting rapidly down the avenue on the road to the station.

“To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven,” said one who had more experience of the affairs of men than usually falls to the lot of his fellows ; and so, there is a time for the seed to be dropped in the furrows, a time for the tender leaflet to appear, a time for the blade to shoot, to flower, to ripen, to be garnered. As Reginald A’Bear drove to the station, he saw that the fields were getting ready for the harvest ; indeed, the sickle was

already at work on the sunny slopes of the South Devon hills. But with him and his friends it was yet the flowering season. May no storm blast the fair promise of the future harvest, for alas ! how often when the flowers drop off no fruit appears.

CHAPTER V.

Not three years, but three years and a half had passed away, and Reginald A'Bear, now in his twenty-first year, had never visited South Devon since the day when he had wished Lorna "good-bye," in the old hall at Burrscombe; indeed he had never seen the shores of England from the Michaelmas of '48, when he had said farewell to the white cliffs of Dover from the deck of the packet as it made its way through a chopping sea to the port of Calais. Many letters with various postmarks had arrived at Bath and Sandstone, which being considered common property, generally made an extra journey after their arrival. During that time he had visited

almost every place and city of mark from Paris to Constantinople, from St. Petersburg to Lisbon, from Naples to Copenhagen. One winter had been passed on the borders of the Lake of Geneva, another at Cannes, while the greater part of 1850 had been spent among the novel scenes of a German university.

A true friendship, founded on mutual regard and esteem, had soon sprung up between the tutor and his pupil, and when Mr. Mapeley had announced his intention of visiting Egypt in the winter of '50 and '51, in the hopes of patching up his health for a season, Reginald, much as he wished to return home, could not be dissuaded from accompanying him.

Although Mr. Mapeley honestly tried to alter his decision—for, as he told him, he would sacrifice one of the best years of his life—yet he was in heart not sorry that his pupil had remained firm in the matter; for he had been gradually learning to depend

upon him in many things, and was conscious that his life could not be prolonged much longer.

During the following summer, as they were returning home through Switzerland, with the intention of visiting the Exhibition of '51, owing to a slight and unaccustomed exertion, which would have been nothing to any one in strong health, he had broken a blood-vessel. This, of course, had prevented their journey, and so it was that three years and a half had passed away since Reginald had left home, for he had determined that nothing should now induce him to leave Mr. Mapeley until he needed not his assistance any longer. The summer had been passed at Lucerne, and they were now located for the winter at Nice.

It was the last afternoon of the last day of 1851, and they were seated in the window of one of the hotels at Nice facing the sea, and what a contrast between the two! Sickness and health—life and death. Mr. Mapeley was lying on a couch—half easy

chair, half bed—with his thin, white, transparent hands clasped together before him, gazing intently on the deep blue of the Mediterranean sea that stretched far away to the southward.

Opposite to him, but rather in the background, was his sometime pupil, but now valet, courier, nurse, and friend, looking as much the picture of health and strength as he was of weakness and debility. Six feet in height, and measuring an equal number of inches between the tips of his fingers when his arms were extended at right angles with his body; with the same black wavy hair of his childhood, but now in addition, a silky beard and moustaches of the same colour; with the same noble brow which had broadened and become more solidified; with the same bright and intelligent eyes, that when they were looking steadfastly into a friend's, and they had a trick of earnest gazing, seemed to search his very soul—and he had mixed more among his fellow men, and had

had far more opportunities of knowing the world and its ways, than usually falls to the lot of most young men of his age. Such was Reginald A'Bear at this time, as he was sitting looking into his friend's face, and trying to read his thoughts—the very picture of health, strength, and manliness.

One thing had completely disappeared from his face. Indecision and irresolution had been replaced by a look of vigour and determination. Any one who had known him before might have thought that the beard and moustaches had given a look of fictitious resolution to his countenance; but it was not so. His character had been surely, if slowly, forming and strengthening, and from having had for some time to arrange everything both for himself and Mr. Mapeley, he had acquired, especially during the last few months, those most essential qualities of self-reliance and resolution. So that while his mouth was still of the same shape as his

mother's, it had the firmness and decision of his father's.

They had been sitting for some moments without speaking, when Mr. Mapeley broke the silence, saying, as he still continued gazing from the window—

“It is very beautiful, and seems to grow more so every day. It shows the truth of the old thought, that we never appreciate things rightly until we are about to lose them.” And then, after a pause, he continued, “I ought to be thankful that, under the providence of God, I shall be permitted to end my days here, where at any rate I shall die easier than in England.” He paused again, and after a moment said, as if communing with his own thoughts rather than speaking to his pupil—

*“Pallida mors æquo pulsat pede pauperum tabernas,
Regumque turres. O beate Sesti
Vitæ summa brevis spem nos vetat inchoare longam.”*

“How strange it is that the same thought of the uncertainty of life should teach the

Christian to despise the world, and make Horace enjoin upon his friends the duty of enjoying it to the uttermost, as the main object of life. Ah! he was a better philosopher who said, 'If in this life only we have hope in Christ we are of all men the most miserable.' No wonder the Apostle was afterwards carried away by his enthusiasm into the most noble flight of oratory that he ever penned. Still, however surely founded may be our hopes, no one, I think, can hear the beat of that dread foot as it daily approaches nearer and nearer, totally unmoved."

"But I hope you may be spared a little longer, indeed, you seem to be stronger this afternoon than you have been since we have been at Nice," Reginald answered. "I am going to write to-morrow to the President of Magdalene, and say that I shall not be able to come up for another term."

"A mere flicker of the candle before it goes out," Mr. Mapeley answered. "I think that you had better put off writing for a little

longer. I am sensible that my end cannot be very far off, nearer perhaps than either of us are aware. I can never repay you for your disinterested conduct, but God will. You have been indeed a friend, *un frère de charité* to me; and if a dying man's prayers and blessings are of any avail, you have them often and often."

"You make a great mistake," his pupil rejoined. "I have received far more than I have given; for I have only ministered to your bodily wants, while you have more than repaid the debt by what you are teaching me from day to day, and I am each day learning more. There are no such lessons, there cannot be, as those which may be learnt from a sick bed."

"What you say is indeed true," he responded; "as you know, I took high honours at Oxford, and about that time, in the pride of my intellect, the old paths contented me no longer, and I determined to accept nothing but what was satisfactory to my own un-

aided reason. God only knows whither I might have wandered. Then came that sudden crushing blow which I told you of. This in some measure opened my eyes, when I found that I could derive no comfort from my own opinions, although for a time, I willfully refused to recognize the fact. However, I one day met with a wise old friend of my father, who, while refusing to argue, advised me to take a curacy in a populous district, saying, 'that the best antidote against religious doubts was moral action.' I acted upon his advice, but rather in the hopes of escaping from my thoughts than from any better motive. But, after a time, when I found that the simplest truths, those which I had learnt at my mother's knee, and had so long despised, alone were able to move the masses or comfort the dying, I insensibly began to preach them, and in the end to believe them. You know the proof of the pudding is in the eating, although I am afraid that I was convinced very much against my will."

“ Was the Manchester curacy the only one that you ever held ? ” his pupil asked.

“ Yes,” he answered ; “ I never felt any inclination to leave, until my health obliged me to give it up. I gradually grew to love the people and they learnt to trust and love me in return. Not that I ever knew them all, for in our immense parish, when the end of the week came we always felt that what we had done was not half of what we had left undone. They are now building a church in my old district, and if you could, when you come of age, put up a small stained glass window to my memory, it might do good, with just ‘ In memory of the Rev. Montague Mapeley, for eight years curate of this parish,’ beneath it. You must not think that I care for the mere fact of being remembered, but the sight of the window might remind some of my old parishioners of words which they may have listened to in former days.”

Reginald willingly promised. They conversed on and off on many kindred subjects

until some time after Mr. Mapeley's usual hour for retiring. Reginald saw him to his room, and having made the usual arrangements for his comfort and convenience, sought his own, and immediately took out his pocket book and wrote in it the words of his tutor's old friend, which had struck him as being very forcible, "The best antidote against doubts in religion is moral action."

The next morning, after dressing, taking with him the usual egg beat up with sherry which Mr. Mapeley was accustomed to drink the first thing in the morning, he entered his friend's room; and what was his distress and poignant grief to discover him lying on the floor. The glass dropped from his nerveless hand, and for a moment he stood as though stunned with the sudden shock, unable to move or call. As soon as he had somewhat recovered himself, he went and lifted the head, but he had evidently been dead for some hours, and there was a sweet, calm look upon the face. He was lying not far from the door,

and Reginald A'Bear thought at first that he must have been taken ill in the night, and had been on his way to call him—but, no—the bed had not been slept upon, and the candle had evidently burnt itself out. But he noticed, and what mighty consolation was there in the fact! two marks upon the bed—they were the marks of his dear friend's hands and arms. Montague Mapeley's last act had then been an act of prayer, and he knew that he would not have been forgotten in those petitions. Doubtless, his prayers had been earnest, more earnest perhaps even than ordinary, they may have been prolonged imprudently, and when he had felt the sudden pang of his approaching end, he may have attempted to summon his pupil. His end had evidently been calm and painless.

These and many more such thoughts flashed through his mind as he glanced around the room. Reginald had known that Mr. Mapeley's end would most likely be swift and sudden, but now that it had come, he could hardly

realize the fact; and somehow or other he felt no inclination to shed a tear, and after the first few moments felt more awestruck than sad.

A short time he spent thus alone with the silent dead; and then, having gently closed the door and locked it, sought the landlord, and having told him that his friend had suddenly died in the night, explained as well as he could the nature of the occurrence.

A few days later, a small gathering, consisting of the chaplain, Reginald A'Bear, and a few English visitors, were standing round a new-made grave, and listening to the solemn words of our impressive Burial Service; and the chief mourner was weeping silently, for he was now beginning to realize the extent of his loss in all its bitterness. On the following day he left for England.

CHAPTER VI.

WHAT had become meanwhile of the other members of the happy party who had spent the summer of 1848 together, 'mid the pleasant scenery of South Devon? The three years and a half had glided away not altogether uneventfully, if almost imperceptibly, and they were in the morning of manhood and womanhood; just at that period of life when, with the budding feelings of men and women the freshness and hopefulness of youth remain. But in none had so great a change taken place mentally and morally as in Reginald A'Bear, the reason being that none of them had been placed in similar circumstances. Even Gerty, the youngest of the

party, was now entering upon her nineteenth year, while Lorna had said "good-bye" to her teens, and was nearing her twentieth birthday. A very firm friendship, something more than usually obtains that name among young ladies, had sprung up between Lorna Maitland and Reginald's cousins: for Lorna had spent two years at a finishing school at Bath, and there had been a frequent interchange of visits between the two houses, and owing to Reginald's continued absence, one or other of the girls was usually at Burrscombe to keep their old grandmother company. There was another reason, too, for an increase of friendship. The mutual sympathy between Edric and Winnifred had grown into a stronger feeling, and though they were not actually engaged, as the parents on both sides considered that Edric was at any rate too young, there was, with their consent, a mutual understanding between them, and very proud indeed was Winnifred of her lover, and well she might be. He had won the Baliol

Scholarship from Tiverton, and was already spoken of at Oxford as one of the most promising students to whom a bright career in any profession that he might choose was open; for he had not only ability, but application also, and an additional motive for his exertions which they knew not of. Mr. Maitland was a comparatively poor man, and his son knew that he had his own way to make in the world, and so he felt that he was working not only for himself, but for Winny also. He knew that she was proud of him, and knew also that she would never have given her heart to him unless she could have been proud of what he had given her in return.

And what of Lorna? The promise of her girlhood had been more than fulfilled, and wherever she went, and she was now in the height of her peculiar beauty, she was universally admired; while those who knew her best said that the beauty of her heart was even superior to that of her bright eyes and winning smile.

When Reginald had left her standing in the hall, she had remained for a while trembling with emotion, and for some time afterwards felt very melancholy, as if she never could be quite happy until he should have returned again ; and, though unconsciously, was ready to have given him her heart—but he never asked for it.

The old song says that “ absence makes the heart grow fonder,” and so it may, but not if it is prolonged for three years and a half. Even if he had written, and revealed the state of his heart, she would have responded to his feelings, for she loved him so dearly as a brother that her love would easily have grown into the stronger feeling. But he kept putting it off from day to day until his return, which, as we have seen, was hindered by Mr. Mapeley’s illness ; and so he had remained the brother merely, while another had commenced to occupy that place in her heart which once might have been his.

Charlie O’Connor, now a handsome and

smart young officer in the Artillery, and not only so, but honoured and respected by his brother officers, had found that it was an easier matter to fall in, than to fall out, of love again with Lorna Maitland, and remembering Edric's promise, which he had made a note of at the time, to bring his sister to Bath in the winter, he determined to stop there on his way to Ireland ; and was made very happy the week before Christmas by finding Lorna and her brother at Landsdown Crescent, and a ball going to take place there the same evening.

He at once secured her as his partner for the first quadrille, and was soon as happy as a young man of eighteen could be under the circumstances, for Lorna, remembering her foolish remark of the previous summer, did all she could to make amends for it. But he soon saw upon what very slender foundation he was building his hopes, for during a pause in the mazes of the supper valse, his partner said, with a sigh—

“Ah, if only Reggie were here, it would be perfect.”

This was a great damper to his ardour. It was not so much the words themselves as the tone and the sigh, and he at once came to the conclusion that Lorna and Reginald must be in love with one another, and that he must set to work again at the falling out business. So he sternly refused all invitations to prolong his stay at Bath, and left for Ireland by the Bristol steamer the very next morning.

They did not meet again until shortly after the opening of the Exhibition, during the previous summer, when they had accidentally encountered one another in the crowded rooms of the Royal Academy. His heart had had many a casual occupant during those two years and a half, but at the sight of Lorna, in all her grace and beauty, his love burst forth again in all its strength, especially as she seemed equally pleased at their unexpected meeting. He knew that Reginald had not been home for three years, so naturally con-

cluded that his previous suppositions must have been wrong, and that he would not be acting dishonourably to his old friend by trying to win Lorna Maitland's love. In this endeavour he was much assisted by her aunt, Mrs. Surtees, the widow of an East Indian officer, with whom she was staying at the time, one of those persons who could scent from afar a possible wedding, and was far too willing to assist in bringing it about, quite regardless of want of means, incompatibility of temper, or any possible or disagreeable consequences. "Thank heaven," she would say, when spoken to on the subject, "marriages were made in some better place than her drawing room." So not only did Charles O'Connor at once receive a general invitation to Oxford Terrace, where they were lodging at the time, but not a morning passed that did not find them examining together, or pretending to examine, the various objects of interest in the Exhibition.

Mrs. Surtees used to sit down in the

neighbourhood of the great fountain, and then send them, nothing loth, on voyages of discovery. As may be supposed, the young lieutenant made the most of those precious moments, and as they both had naturally the gift of pleasing, when his leave was over, he was, to quote a mental expression which he used of himself, "done for at last;" while the young lady had very different feelings with regard to him than she had ever experienced towards another; and with much mutual satisfaction did they look forward to the fact that while Mrs. Surtees' home was at Plymouth, only about 18 miles from Sandstone, O'Connor was under orders to join the battalion at the same town.

Curiously enough, though not from any motives of deceit, in the various letters written during this period they made but few allusions to one another.

It was now towards the middle of February, and Charles O'Connor, Lorna, Winny and Gerty, were about to take part in a very

different scene to that which Reginald had assisted at about a month earlier—viz., at a fancy ball given by the officers of the Plymouth garrison.

Lorna had been staying with her aunt for about a week; and Winny and Gerty, who were at Burrscombe with their grandmother, had come over expressly for the occasion, but were to return again on the following day. They were not, however, a very merry party, as Winnifred had rather adopted the tone of one who had commenced thus early in life to taste of its troubles, and was thinking whether it was right for her to be thus enjoying herself while Edric was working hard for her sake at Oxford. And as the battery to which O'Connor was attached had suddenly received orders to start for Malta, neither he nor Lorna, as may be supposed, were in the most exuberant spirits. He had quite determined to know his fate before sailing; but Lorna seemed to avoid ever being in his company alone since her coming to Plymouth,

and he soon saw that if he was to speak, he must make an opportunity for himself.

It was the morning of the great event, and the three young ladies and Charles O'Connor were seated in the innocent guileless drawing room of Mrs. Surtees; the only really merry one of the party being Gertrude Sinclair, who was wild with delight, in anticipation of the coming pleasure of the evening. She had also grown into a charming specimen of budding womanhood; uncalculating and impulsive, with impulses that were usually right; the universal favourite of every one who knew her, young and old; not, indeed, with the finely chiselled features of her cousin, or with the yet more remarkable beauty of Lorna Maitland, but still with a loveliness of her own, of a type of which you may see many examples among the girls of England; with small features, none perhaps absolutely perfect, and yet with any of which it would have been difficult to find fault, with a lithe and supple figure that

seemed made for dancing ; with laughing eyes, which were here, there and everywhere ; and good-nature written in every lineament of her countenance, a good-nature which was sometimes rather severely tested.

On the present occasion, however, she seemed to have adopted another character for the nonce, as she was saying most energetically—

“ If he were to ask me, I should make him a most distant bow, and politely refuse. But I am sure that you won’t introduce him to us.”

“ Fancy, Gerty making a distant bow to any one,” said Lorna, laughing, “ he would look into your merry face, and think you were some how or other acting in an assumed character.”

“ I should very quickly undeceive him, then, for I should ask him if he was still as skilful as formerly in the use of the racket handle and compasses. However, I have no fear of being put to the test.”

"But what am I to do," suggested O'Connor, "supposing that he should come to me and say, 'that young lady belongs, I believe, to your party, would you favour me with an introduction?' Why, I should be obliged to say, 'Miss Gertrude Sinclair, Mr. Rufford—Mr. Rufford, Miss Gertrude Sinclair.' "

"Oh, well, I'm sure I hope that he won't," answered Gerty, with as long a face as it was possible for her to assume, "it would spoil my pleasure for the whole of the evening; I really think that such people ought to be sent to Coventry by universal consent."

"A sort of spontaneous black-balling by the ladies," O'Connor replied. "I am afraid, though, that you might find your proposition rather difficult to carry into effect, as Rufford is rather a favourite in his own set, and with certain young ladies too."

"Then I don't envy them their taste," she answered, decidedly.

"Really Gerty," put in her cousin, "it is

quite ridiculous to think about what some one may have done to one's cousin years ago. I never knew before that you were such an unforgiving little monster. I am sure that I shall be quite ready to dance with him if he wishes it. What do you say, Lorny?"

"I should not have the courage to refuse, but I fear that I should have much about the same feelings as Gerty."

"I am afraid, though," said O'Connor, "that neither of you will be able to put your feelings to the test, as he knows my opinion of him too well to trouble me about the matter. It is *one*," he added, emphasizing the word, and Lorna noticed it, "of the most disagreeable thoughts connected with my departure from England, that I shall have to be constantly in his society for some time to come, as we have been appointed to the same battery."

Shortly afterwards he took his leave, but came again in the evening to escort them to

the ball. Mrs. Surtees was dressed as a matron of the last century, and looked very well in her powder and patches; Winnifred, as a high born Castilian maiden, and the mantilla suited well her dark hair and classical features; Gertrude, as Amy Robsart, although her cousin assured her that there was nothing in common between their characters; while Lorna was attired as Early Spring. Her beautiful hair, woven in thick coils, which formed a coronet of gold, not hiding, but rather revealing the graceful contour of her head, was circled with a dew-drop sprinkled wreath, composed of early spring flowers, primroses and purple violets, delicate wood anemones, with a tinge of pink, and still more tender cyclamens, and tiny fern fronds of the palest green. Her dress was simple as befitted her own, as well as her assumed character—*simplex munditiis*—of the softest, purest white, of some cloud-like, gauzy material, the *corsage à l'enfant*, in the folds of which nestled little

bunches of flowers, and sprays of fern, which floated across the body, and down the skirt, where they joined larger bouquets round the upper skirt, or tunic, or whatever it may have been called in those days; the whole having been planned and given by her aunt, but who would trust no one but her own London dressmaker to carry her ideas into effect. Upon her fan, designed and painted by herself, was represented a bunch of the same flowers as were around her head. Otherwise she wore no other ornament but her own loveliness, except one single row of pearls, which circled her fair neck, on which, so fair it was, they hardly could be noticed.

As Charles O'Connor presented her with a bouquet of cyclamens and other early spring flowers, which he had ordered at least a fortnight before, no wonder that he thought that she was more beautiful than ever.

Who can describe the glittering uniforms, the gay dresses, and the fairy scene which met their eyes as they entered the ball room—

officers of the Artillery, Engineers, Marines, and of the Line, and from the cavalry depots of Exeter, mingled with kings, and turbaned Turks, Indian chiefs and Neapolitan fishermen, cavaliers and Scottish chieftains, nobles and courtiers of every century, except the nineteenth, and peasants of every country except Great Britain; and conversing with them, queens (no less than four Maries of Scotland), courtly dames and high born maidens in gorgeous raiment, maidens of low degree in quaint costumes and stranger coiffures, flower girls, and shepherdesses with awkward crooks, characters from history and fiction, heathen goddesses, and months and seasons, some with snow upon their dresses and poor little robins in their hair, or owls flying about their skirts, others with crescents on their heads and wings growing upon their shoulders.

Doubtless, a stern moralist, had there been one present, might have seen much to have

justified his exclamation, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," and many an elder, by looking on, found much interest in watching the incongruity of the occasional situations of the dancers. It was irresistible, for instance, to any one with a keen sense of the ludicrous, to see Amy Robsart fearlessly valseing with the chief of the Mohawk Indians; Marie Antoinette whirling about with a Neapolitan fisherman; Queen Elizabeth hob-a-nobbing with the Great Mogul; a peasant chatting to a duchess; or Julius Cæsar and the fair maid of Perth *vis-à-vis*-ing to Spring and an officer of the Artillery. That there was any incongruity in such proceedings had evidently never entered into the minds of the chief actors in the scene.

Among all that fair vision of youth and beauty—and no country can show more lovely specimens of English girlhood than Devonshire—Lorna Maitland led the van, closely followed by Winny, Gerty and many another. The most observed, however,

though not the most beautiful, was a young girl dressed as Folly, with helmet on head, punchinello in hand, and an apology for a dress, who acted only too well in character; but then she was the spoilt daughter of a doating and widowed father, and the pet of the whole regiment, of which her father was colonel.

No wonder that as Gertrude Sinclair entered the room, she uttered an exclamation of surprise and pleasure, and her cousin had some difficulty for a time in keeping her enthusiasm within reasonable limits. She was by far the best dancer of the three, if not the best in the room, and before long was delivered from any fear of having to dance with Rufford, as her card was filled from end to end.

And so the ball rolled on, and Gerty was not the only one by any means who thought that it grew "more delightful" every minute.

It was after supper time, and Charles O'Connor, with Lorna on his arm, was

slowly, very slowly, making his way back to the ball room, when he said in as careless a voice as possible—

“Do you remember the present you promised to give me last Saturday afternoon?”

It was a picture which she was painting of Plymouth bay from the rocks below the Hoe.

“Oh, yes,” she answered, “it is commenced, but I have had so little time this week; I will set to work at it, however, in earnest the first thing to-morrow morning, for we shall be too tired to do anything much but sleep to-day.”

“You are taking it from the rocks just below the citadel?” he said in as unconcerned a voice as he could assume.

“Not exactly. I found that there was a much better view from a seat in a warm nook a little higher up.”

“I shall prize it so much,” he answered, “as it will remind me of my last happy week at Plymouth. Whatever can be their object in suddenly banishing us to Malta, I can’t

think. But I suppose a soldier must not complain, although it does seem rather hard to have to leave when I am every day discovering additional reasons for wishing to stay."

They had now reached the entrance into the ball room, and were standing for a moment watching and discussing the several couples as they passed, oblivious of the fact that they were both engaged to other partners for the dance which was about to commence, when O'Connor felt her tremble and take a tighter hold of his arm.

"Lorna, dearest Lorny," he said, and the words had left his lips before he could recall them, "what is the matter with you, do you feel unwell?"

"Oh, no," she answered, "it was only a foolish thought that entered my mind, but don't ask me about it now. I will tell you when we meet to-morrow, or the next day. It might only spoil your pleasure now."

He looked at her; she was gazing down

and blushing, while the mingled emotions caused by his words were plainly to be read in her speaking countenance. Another moment, and, notwithstanding the many present around, the words would have been whispered—when one of his brother officers, spying them in the distance, came and claimed his partner for the *galoppe* which was about to commence.

“Bad luck to you,” O’Connor inwardly ejaculated, but on second thoughts determined that perhaps it was just as well, and as he walked away to find his partner, said to himself—

“I wonder what it was she was thinking about; but I will know that, and something else too, before very long, and I don’t think that I need be very much afraid of the answer.”

As may be supposed, they were neither of them the most lively and entertaining partners during the remainder of the evening.

As soon as the two cousins were comfort-

ably seated, in the early part of the afternoon, in the carriage which was taking them back to Burrscombe, Winny said, "I expect we shall have some news from Plymouth before the end of the week."

"Why? what do you mean?" her cousin answered.

"Really, Gerty, you don't mean to say that you were so blind as not to notice what was going on between Lorna and O'Connor last night?"

"You know that I was dancing every dance, so suppose that I had no time to think about other people," she replied.

"Well, I feel pretty confident that he will not sail for Malta without having an answer of some sort or another; I expect that he has a shrewd suspicion of what it will be, if he does not know already."

"I always made sure that Lorna and Reginald would some day be married," answered Gerty, "and I suppose that made me never think about O'Connor."

"So used I," rejoined her sister, "but Charlie O'Connor and Lorna saw a great deal of one another during the Exhibition last year, and I noticed that she had lately avoided any mention of his name, and my suspicions were confirmed by what I saw last night. People who have always been brought up together very seldom marry; I suppose that they know one another's weaknesses too well."

Gerty did not answer, for as she remembered some expressions in Reginald's letters during the past three years (and they had been the great correspondents) with reference to his old playmate, she was afraid that her cousin's feelings towards Lorna Maitland were somewhat different to what Winnifred supposed.

On the following day, Lorna, remembering her promise, was up betimes, and having partaken of an early breakfast by herself, as her aunt was not a very early riser, walked down to the seat and commenced busily to paint; for

in that warm nook below the cliff facing the south, although it was only in the month of February, the air felt almost as warm as on a summer's day.

O'Connor had also remembered the promise, and, seated in an angle of the citadel, had been watching for some time her aunt's house on the opposite side of the Hoe. He saw Lorna come out, and followed her with his eyes as she walked across the grass, until she disappeared from view; he waited about half an hour in order not to attract attention, and then followed her.

She was so busily painting that she did not notice the sound of his feet as he descended the steps, until he was quite near. Directly she saw his face, as she told him afterwards, she knew what was coming, and for a moment looked as though she would have liked to have run away, but she was sitting in a rocky *cul-de-sac*, and there was no place to run to.

At last the moment so anxiously looked forward to by O'Connor had come, but at first he seemed unable to make use of it, for they sat together for another half hour happily undisturbed, while Lorna went on studiously with her painting, which had all to be washed out the next day; and the young lieutenant only occasionally made a remark with reference to it, or to something else of even less importance under present circumstances. The words were often on his lips, but they died away again and remained unspoken. "Charles O'Connor, you're a fool," he said to himself. "Speak out like a man. Fancy, blarney deserting an Irishman in the time of need." But still they would not come.

At last, however, with a great effort, he managed to say—and when the words were spoken felt that the "tide in the affairs of man" had come at length—"By the way, Lorna, what was it you were thinking about which disturbed you so much when we were

standing at the door of the ball room yesterday?"

"Oh, it was very silly of me," she answered, looking up from her painting; "when I saw the bright and glittering scene, Byron's lines on the eve of the battle of Waterloo came into my mind, and I thought how everything would have been changed if we had suddenly heard 'the cannon's opening roar.'" And then she added timidly, as she looked down again, and tried, but vainly—her hand was trembling so—to go on painting, "perhaps your going away put the idea into my head."

"Are you then very sorry I am going away?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered, in a low soft voice, which seemed to have taken its note from the rippling waters beneath their feet.

He was now himself again, and rapidly poured out the story of his love into her willing ears; but she only looked down and answered not.

“Lorna, my darling,” he pleaded, “I own that I am in no way worthy of you, but I will dedicate my life to make you happy. I know that you love me, you cannot hide it. Will you not say one word, just one word to make me happy?”

She said something at last in a low and hardly distinguishable whisper; then, looking up, she placed her hand, from which the brush had fallen, into his. If he did not hear the scarcely articulated monosyllable, there was no doubt about the meaning of the action; the next moment he was passionately kissing the little hand with which she had pledged her troth to him, and in a very little while, as he felt that she was his for life, was straining her to his heart.

Had she then so entirely forgotten that farewell kiss in the old hall at Burrscombe, and the twice repeated promise that “she could never forget,” that “she would never be a bit different?”

Yes; for the time at any rate she had forgotten that, and everything else. She only knew that Charlie had asked her to be his wife, and that she had not said him "nay."

CHAPTER VII.

It was on the following Monday morning that a small breakfast party were assembled in Reginald's rooms on the ground floor in Magdalene College, overlooking the deer park; consisting, besides the host, of our old friends Edric Maitland, Hugh A'Bear, and Reginald's nearest neighbour, Gerard Lisle, a lad just come up fresh from a public school life, and who had privately confessed to Reginald that he would far sooner have spent another half year at Marlborough than have come to college. He was a lively youth, anything but wanting in ability as he had obtained a demiship, but had apparently accepted Horace's notion of the main object of life as the true

one, and evidently intended to get as much pleasure out of the present as he could, having enthusiastically thrown himself into every innocent enjoyment that university life could afford. He had as yet made no choice of a profession ; his mother, the widow of an officer in the army, hoped that he might be a clergyman ; but he had no particular inclinations in that direction himself, and supposed that something would turn up before the next three years were over.

Reginald had just managed to reach England in time for the commencement of Term, and the day after his arrival had looked up Edric Maitland at Baliol, who was not aware of his arrival. When he had first entered the room, his old friend was out, but his eye had been immediately attracted by a most lovely painting of Lorna Maitland in watercolours, the work of the artist from whom she had received lessons. He walked up and examined it, and his heart beat quicker as he noticed how her beauty had matured in the three

years during which he had been absent. The same sweet, lovable expression was there as had been on her face when he had wished her farewell, and which he had ever since cherished in his memory ; but in addition there was now somewhat of the thought and dignity of approaching womanhood.

As he was examining it Edric came in, and after a glad and friendly greeting on both sides, Reginald said—"Lorna has indeed grown into a beauty, more than fulfilled the promise of sixteen ; but somehow or other I cannot help thinking of her as the little Lorny I used to know years ago rather than as a grown up woman."

"Of course I ought not to say so," her brother answered ; "but I have never seen any one who comes up to my notion of beauty like my little sister."

"The sight of this picture has indeed made me more than ever anxious to visit dear old South Devon once more," he replied ; "no one can tell how often during the last year I have

longed to see you all again ; but I never could have forgiven myself had I left Mr. Mapeley in his extremity."

"And you shall not miss your reward," rejoined Edric Maitland warmly.

"Well, old fellow," said Reginald A'Bear after a short pause, looking at the portrait once again, "the sight of this picture, as you see, has moved me very much. I don't see why I should keep it a secret from you, but I have loved Lorny from the time we were little children together, and have never forgotten her for a day all the time that I have been away. I certainly shall not let the Easter vacation go by without telling her so."

Now Winny had mentioned her suspicions to Edric, but as he had not believed them at the time, and Lorna had hardly ever even mentioned O'Connor's name since, he replied at once, "I am so glad to hear you say so. I have often thought and hoped that you might be my brother some day, and still more since I have been engaged to Winny."

“Ah, that reminds me,” Reginald answered, “that I have to congratulate you; everybody says that you were made for one another.”

“What everybody says, I suppose must be true,” he replied, smiling; “she is a noble girl, and if I did not love work, I think she would have urged me on in spite of myself; she is, I think, even far more anxious for my success here than I am myself.”

On the morning in question, when breakfast was over, the four friends sat for a time discussing various 'Varsity matters, when Gerard Lisle, turning to Reginald, said—“What can be more absurd than the present system here? It is simply ridiculous to suppose that I am cleverer or know more than you, and yet most likely at this moment I should take a higher position in the schools than you could, just because I have spent all the best years of my life in being crammed with Latin and Greek until I hate the whole list of venerable authors like—like—”

"Like what?" said Reginald, laughing, while his cousin exclaimed—

"Fancy this antiquated individual talking about the best days of his life!"

"Like the globules of assafoetida, which I used to be indulged with in the remote antiquity of my childhood," he replied, with a nod to Hugh.

"Rather an unfortunate similitude," suggested Edric, "for at any rate, they were given to do you good."

"On the contrary," he responded; "I think it is a particularly good one, for my fond maternity used, I am quite certain, to deluge me with far more than my bodily health required, which, in some degree, accounts for the shortness of my stature. But, joking apart, I consider for all the practical purposes of life that A'Bear knows far more, even now, than half the dons in the university. I would sooner, any day, know four modern languages than two dead ones; and have a practical knowledge of the Geo-

graphy of Modern Europe than be able to draw a map of the world according to Herodotus. I'll guarantee that at the present moment far more public schoolboys know the date of the battle of Salamis a deal better than the battle of the Nile, and could tell you far more about the colonies of Greece than the colonies of Great Britain; which things ought not to be."

"Perhaps not," Reginald answered, smiling at Lisle's comparisons. "I don't see, though, why they should not know both; you must allow that you have learnt things in their right order, according to date, if not according to utility."

"There is more in that last argument than you intend," suggested his cousin. "If it were not for our school and college days, few of us would think of looking into the literature of the past, and then the thoughts and writings of some of the greatest minds the world has ever seen would soon become as dead as the language in which they were written.

When a man is thirty, or even forty, he may begin to read Shakespeare, Milton, or Thomas Carlyle; but there is not one in a hundred who would then think of opening Homer or Virgil, or commencing Aristotle."

"If it were possible, Lisle," added Edric, "for every young man to spend three years on the Continent, as Reginald has done, such a method of education might answer well enough; but under the circumstances of most of us, I don't see that any much better system could be adopted than the present. The main object of education, after all, is to strengthen and draw out the mind, and the Latin grammar will serve as well, if not better than anything else, for a commencement."

"Your argument would be all very well," Lisle answered, if we were all going to live to the age of Methuselah, but as more than nine hundred years have been knocked off since then, there is no time for most of us to carry out your plan. I only wish that I knew French and German half as well as I

know Latin and Greek, for I am certain that it would be far more useful to me in after life. Why? When my uncle was at college, he went to congratulate a man, now a somewhat celebrated member of Parliament, who had just taken a double first, and found him sitting on a chair, with all his books on the table in front of him, and his fingers up to his nose."

"Mere bravado," said Hugh, sarcastically, while Edric laughingly added, "What an ungrateful disciple of Alma Mater."

"Your guns are a deal too heavy shotted for me," Lisle rejoined; "but what is your candid opinion, A'Bear, as you have taken hardly any part in the discussion?"

"Why, I thought it better to refrain, as the value of my attainments seemed to have been the origin of the argument. But, as you have asked me, I must say that, while admitting the cogency of what my cousin and Edric have said, I think there is much truth in your assertions also. From what I saw

during my stay abroad, especially in Germany, I came to the conclusion that we want far more technical education in England; indeed, I cannot see why we should not be able to gain honours here in modern languages as well as ancient."

Shortly afterwards they left, and Reginald having attended a lecture on Herodotus, and paid a visit to Maclaren, joined Edric by appointment to dine with his cousin in the hall of Exeter, of which college Hugh was a scholar. They spent about two hours in his rooms when dinner was over, and then, as they were all three reading men, they took their leave, each with the intention of having some hours work before midnight.

When Reginald reached his room, he found two letters—one from O'Connor, and the other from Lorna, lying on his table, both having arrived by the second post. It did not strike him by any means as a curious coincidence, but taking up Lorna's, he said to himself "two quite unexpected pleasures."

He opened it, and at first so unforeseen was the intelligence, that he could hardly understand the news, much less realize it. He read the first few sentences again. It was all too true—Lorna, whom he had treasured in his heart for so many years, was lost to him for ever! In his absence he had been supplanted by another; and that other, his old familiar friend, Charlie O'Connor! It was a bitter, cruel blow—such a one as has struck down many another in the pride of life, ruined some physically, some mentally, some morally—and for a moment he staggered beneath it. As once before in his life, in the library at Woolhurst, everything swam around him, while his face grew white as death, and the cold sweat stood upon his forehead; he grasped the table for support, and almost, as if by instinct, sought the sofa that stood between the windows.

He was just beginning to come round again when Lisle entered the room, and seeing his condition and the opened letter lying

on the table, with innate delicacy stood irresolute in the doorway, desirous of offering his services, and yet unwilling to intrude.

As soon as Reginald saw who it was, with a great effort he said as calmly as he could, "Is that you, Lisle? I have just had some bad news and it has rather unnerved me. Would you mind sporting the oak? I shall be all right in a minute. If you will look into the cupboard, you will find a bottle of brandy. Will you open it and pour me out a wine-glass?"

Lisle did as he was requested, and when he had brought it, Reginald drank it off, and almost immediately felt more like himself again. Otherwise it had no more effect upon him than a glass of spring water.

Lisle never thought of asking him the nature of his intelligence, and naturally concluding that Reginald would like to be alone, left as soon as he could conveniently. Almost immediately afterwards, the room felt so confined and oppressive, that, putting the

letters into his pocket, he sought the open air, and crossing the bridge walked straight out into the country. He was afraid, too, that Lorna's brother might come, and did not wish to meet him just at present.

"He has defrauded me these two times," he exclaimed bitterly, as he hurried on; "he was the cause of my fall at Woolhurst, and now he has robbed me—yes, robbed me—of her and of my happiness at one blow."

It seemed to him almost as though Lorna had always belonged to him, and that O'Connor must have known of his love for her as he exclaimed again, "He cannot love her as I do, her life has ever been a part of mine; fool that I was ever to have brought him down to Burrscombe. I might have guessed the result." And then again he cried out, and this time with a still more exceeding bitter cry—

"Fickle, faithless, shallow-hearted girl; she must have known that I loved her; she cannot have forgotten our parting. She has

wilfully cast away my love for another—and then to insult me with their letters!”

And as he hurried on yet further into the darkness, carried away in a whirl of passion, thoughts of vindictive hatred passed through his mind, and quivered through his frame; and in his frenzied anger he slew them both in thought, and the stain of blood, though not upon his hands was yet upon his soul. And so walked on, and as his blood became cooler, his anger grew only deeper and more intense.

He had been walking for nearly two hours along the Henley Road, with no idea of the rate at which the time was speeding, and might possibly have walked as far again, when a light gleamed across the road, and as he drew near what seemed to be a gentleman's lodge gate, he heard a sound which made him pause and listen—

“Forgive me, Lord, for Thy dear Son,
The ills that I this day have done;
That with the world, myself, and Thee,
I ere I sleep, at peace may be.”

It was the voice of a child singing the Evening Hymn. The sound of that gentle voice breaking the midnight air with the well-known words seemed to fascinate him. The blind was up, he drew nearer—the father was sitting on one side of the fire, gazing with fond look upon his little daughter; upon the other side was the cradle with its infant occupant, and between them was the mother clasping in her hands those of her child. And still the sweet little voice continued to sing, and the faltering accents of the child were as the song of the robin when he was in the black hole at Woolhurst—they brought him to his senses.

When the hymn was finished, the little one knelt beside her mother's knee, clasped her little hands together, and lifting her pure and tranquil eye, prayed the simple prayer of faith to her Father who is in Heaven; and the strong man bowed his head, and it was with sorrow and repentance that Reginald A'Bear said—

“Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.”

He took out his watch, and was astonished to find the length of time he had been walking—it had seemed to him but a few minutes—and he turned and commenced to retrace his steps physically and mentally. One thing Reginald A’Bear had rather begun to pride himself upon was the perfect command of his feelings and temper; and now it had failed him in the very first hour of trial; and he shuddered as he reflected upon the thoughts which had been running in his mind during that hurried walk. His conscience accused him of contemplated blood-guiltiness, and the voice of a brother’s and a sister’s blood seemed almost ready to cry out against him from the silent meadows around, while he all but felt the mark of Cain upon his brow.

“I could not surely have conceived such awful wickedness in my own heart,” he thought. “God forbid! No, they must

have been direct temptations from the evil one, and are a terrible proof of Satan's personality."

"She is lost to me for ever," he said again, when he had been walking for some-time on his homeward road; but it was in an altered tone of voice, for though there was a wail of sorrow—there was no sound of anger in those words now. "It is all my own fault; I see it all too plainly; I never really told her that I loved her, and she may well have imagined that I did not care for her overmuch, as I have not attempted to see her for so long. She might have been mine; yes, she might have been mine once, if I had only asked her; but now"—and as he gazed into the future, his life looked once more a blank, darkness reigned instead of light. He thought of the picture in her brother's room, and called to mind the inner beauty of her heart and soul, and while he realized to the full the magnitude and hopelessness of his own loss, felt at the

same time that the wonder would have been if his old friend had not loved her.

“Yes, she is lost to me for ever,” he said once more, as he stood upon the bridge, before entering the college. “But no one shall ever know how much it will have cost me to give her up. I have to conquer my love for her; and conquer it, God helping me, I will; to love her now would be a sin. I suppose I must learn to be her friend and brother again,” and he smiled a grim and bitter smile, as he looked over the parapet at the waters beneath his feet. The water was almost still, and the stars of the myriad-spangled firmament were photographed on the dark background. He watched their twinkling for a time; it was as though heaven was being reflected back from the gloomy waters of the Isis. At that moment the clocks began to strike, and he hastened towards the porter’s lodge.

When Reginald A’Bear reached his room, the fire, though it had been made up by the

scout since his departure, was almost out, but remembering that there was a reading lamp on the table in the corner of the room, he felt for it, and taking out the reservoir, poured some of the oil upon the all but extinguished embers ; they revived again, and the fire was soon burning brightly.

He then lit the lamp, and taking the letters out of his pocket, read them, though each line caused him an additional pang. They were both couched in the most affectionate terms. Lorna's was, if anything, a little reserved ; perhaps she had begun to remember the history of their last parting, and to understand that such a scene could never take place between them again. But there was no such reserve in Charlie's. "The first letter I write to announce my undeserved happiness shall be to my old friend, for I owe it all to you"—such was its commencement. It gave an account of the progress of his love, announced that Mr. Maitland had said that if they were of the same mind on O'Connor's

return from the Mediterranean, he would not withhold his consent to their union; that in the meantime they might correspond with one another; and it concluded by hoping that he might before long receive a similar communication from Reginald.

“Ah! Charlie!” said his friend, as he read the letter through again, “you little thought as you wrote, that each word would be a dagger in my heart.”

He went to his dressing case, and unlocking it took out a bundle of letters which he had received from Lorna during the three years which he had been away. He remembered how intense had been the pleasure of receiving them, but still he hesitated not; he walked towards the fire, and throwing them one by one upon the embers, watched them as they vanished into smoke.

But the harder trial was yet to come, and he steeled his heart to meet it unflinchingly; but when he opened the narrow box, and took from it the long curl of beautiful golden hair

which Lorna had allowed him to cut off many years before, when they were playmates together, his heart seemed to sink within him, and his hand trembled as he touched it. It curled around his finger, as though to resist its coming fate. He stood for a moment irresolutely—and then with a great effort cast it upon the glowing ashes ; it heaved for a moment as if in agony, and was then consumed.

The commencement of the struggle had commenced ! And what were Edric Maitland's feelings ? for he had also received a letter the same evening. He felt deeply grieved and disappointed, and at first was almost inclined to be angry with his sister, as he said to himself—

“ What could she see to fancy so much in O'Connor, I can't think ; why, Reggie is worth half a dozen of him. But I don't pretend to understand women, Winny is the only one I ever met with the full complement of brains.”

And then he thought how his friend would receive the intelligence and bear the blow. He knew that he had very strong feelings, and from his own words that he dearly loved his sister, and therefore dreaded the result; but knew not the great change which had been wrought in him during the last six months of his attendance on Mr. Mapeley. He sat and considered the matter for long; but was quite undecided as to the course of action he had better pursue under the circumstances.

“Should he go at once to see him, or wait for him to pay the first visit. To offer condolence would be worse than useless—Reginald would certainly refuse it. To speak what he really thought was out of the question, or even to listen quietly to what Reginald might say in his anger about Lorna; for was she not his sister, and a very dear sister too, and after all she had a perfect right to give her heart to whom she would?

“Or would it not be better to wait until

Reginald should take the initiative? it would be clearly his place under the circumstances. But, no, it was just such reserve and hesitation that was too often the cause of lasting estrangement among friends, and he determined not to let another four-and-twenty hours pass by without having sought an interview with him. Even though Lorna should be engaged to O'Connor was surely no reason that he and Reginald should cease to be friends?"

However, there was no more work accomplished in his room than in his friend's that night, but before retiring to rest Edric Maitland had written a letter to him, asking whether he might come to see him on the following morning; and hoping that their long friendship would be able to withstand even so severe a wrench. It was finished just before going to bed, but not closed, and he determined to read it over again the first thing in the morning, and, if he was still in the same mind, to send it.

The next day, immediately after morning chapel, he gave it to the messenger. This done, he waited anxiously for an answer; fully determined, even should none arrive, to try and see Reginald before the day was over.

Long before noon he received the answer. It was very short, and consisted merely of two words—" *Ita sit.*"

Very shortly afterwards the two friends met again. Reginald, owing to a sleepless night, had lain rather longer than usual, so that when he entered the room almost the first thing that met his eye was Edric's letter lying on the breakfast table; he had immediately despatched the answer. When he heard Edric's step on the stairs, he came to the door to meet him, and as he closed it, said—

"I was so glad to see your handwriting this morning, and that you have come so quickly. You need not have feared that our friendship would be shaken. I need it more than ever now. It was different yesterday"—and he gave him a description, and Edric

shuddered as he listened, of the thoughts and feelings of the previous evening, "but, thank God, all is changed now, and I can think over the matter calmly."

"I am so glad to hear you say so," he answered, "I feared it might have been different; but I ought to have known you better."

"It is no thanks to me, though; no man could have had more bitter, more devilish feelings than were mine at first. It was a child's voice which brought me to my senses." And he told him of the incident.

"It was the voice of God speaking by the lips of a child," his friend replied.

"Yes," he responded; "and, thank God, the anger and hatred have now entirely disappeared. I do not pretend to be a mere stock or stone. Of course I feel the matter keenly and deeply, I should be less than human if I did not; indeed, at the present moment I know that I love Lorna more than ever. I know it too well, but I cannot help my feel-

ings; I will try and conquer them, and shall doubtless succeed in time. I know that there should be no marriage without love, neither should there be any love without marriage; and, as I cannot look forward to the one, I must set to work to kill the other—but it seems at the present moment as if the odds against me were almost too many. Do you remember a conversation we had years ago, when you said that you rather liked to look forward to the trials and difficulties of life as something to be met and conquered?”

“Yes,” he answered, “but I have had few in comparison with you, everything has been fair sailing with me.”

“I have certainly seen more than have fallen to the lot of most young men of one-and-twenty,” Reginald rejoined, and as he seated himself in the window, and looked at the fallow deer, which reminded him of the old park at Bearcroft, the whole history of his life, with its strange vicissitudes, passed as a moving panorama before his mind’s eye;

and he continued after a pause, "I had begun to look at the difficulties of life from your point of view, but little thought I should have this to grapple with, and I say—'what next?' It seems almost an impossible thing to have to bury, as though in the silent grave, a thousand scenes in which Lorna and I have taken part, the very happiest days of my life; to have to wash out all the bright colours, and leave nothing but a blank; and to cease to heed the music of those chords which the mere sound of her name would cause to vibrate in my heart. My heart may well shrink from the conflict where defeat seems to be inevitable."

"But you will try?" said his friend, "you will not be alone."

"Were it not for that thought, I might well give in. Care, they say, doesn't kill; and I suppose I shall conquer in the end."

After talking for some time in much the same strain, Edric rose to go, and, as they

shook one another by the hand even more warmly than usual, Reginald said—

“No one knows of my feelings towards your sister but yourself. Others may suspect, but they shall never know by word or sign. Lorna, and O'Connor especially, must never have any idea of the pain and sorrow they have caused me. I would not rob them of one moment's happiness to gain a year's myself.”

“What you have told me,” he replied, “shall be as though it had never been spoken. Even Winny shall never be told.”

As Edric Maitland walked back again to Baliol College he thought more than ever how foolish Lorna had been to cast away a heart which might have been any woman's glory to have won; but “I suppose,” he said, as he took out a sheet of paper, “that I must write the little woman a letter of congratulation, or she will wonder at the meaning of my silence.”

“Poor Reginald, his will be the harder task;” and he thought what would have been his feelings if he had suddenly learnt that Winny had taken another in his place. But the very notion was so manifestly absurd and impossible that he could not imagine them.

CHAPTER VIII.

How long Charles O'Connor and Lorna might have remained sitting on that seat below the citadel overlooking Plymouth bay, may easily be imagined by those who have ever sat under similar circumstances ; but the sound of some voices, speaking rather loudly in their immediate neighbourhood, suddenly reminded them that there were still other people in the world, and enabled them to assume an unconcerned appearance before the intruders, at present hid by an angle of the rocks, came in sight.

They were two brother officers of O'Connor, with both of whom Lorna had danced at the fancy ball. As the young men were looking

seaward when they approached, Lorna hoped they might escape observation, but it was not to be. When a few yards off, they were seen and recognized. The disordered painting materials, the fallen brush, Lorna's tell-tale blushes, O'Connor's assumed *nonchalance*, all gave evidence of the state of affairs. The young officers would willingly have left them alone, but they were so near that there was nothing for it but to assume a pretended innocence. So, making a polite bow to Lorna, after a few remarks on the beauty of the early spring morning, they as politely took their leave; and, when well out of sight and hearing, one of them said—

“A regular case there, and no mistake.”

“Yes,” answered his friend, “by all appearance the matter was about to be settled when we came up, and I am afraid we must have spoilt the game.”

“I thought O'Connor was a gone coon the night of the ball. By the way, do you know who she is?”

“I believe she is the daughter of a parson somewhere in the neighbourhood,” he replied, “and, if she only has money to correspond with her good looks, O’Connor is in luck, for she is certainly about the prettiest girl I ever met.”

As soon as they were out of sight, with O’Connor’s assistance Lorna gathered together the scattered drawing materials, and they walked across the Hoe to her aunt’s house, where they said “Good-bye” for a while, both feeling very happy.

When Mrs. Surtees heard of what had just taken place—for Lorna, with O’Connor’s consent, told her the history of the morning immediately she entered the drawing room—the worthy dame felt rather nervous at the thought of what her brother might think of the part which she had played in the matter; for she began to consider, when too late, that after all O’Connor was nothing but a lieutenant in the Artillery, and perhaps had only his pay to depend upon. So, by way of

shutting the stable door after the horse had been stolen, she told her niece that she must not see O'Connor until her father knew of what had taken place between them, and had given his consent to their engagement.

That same morning, O'Connor, immediately he reached his quarters, despatched a letter to Mr. Maitland, asking his consent to his engagement with Lorna, saying that he had loved her from the very first day he had ever met her, and would devote his whole life to try and make her happy ; that he was sorry he could not come over and explain everything in person, but that, owing to the battery sailing for Malta on the following Tuesday, he could not obtain leave. That although he had now to depend almost entirely on his pay, yet that his uncle Heffernan made him an allowance, and had often hinted that in case of his marriage he would increase it, &c.

The news was so totally unexpected, that Mr. and Mrs. Maitland were unable for a time to determine what would be the

wisest course to pursue, and while the husband, in a thoughtful attitude, sat looking into the fire, the wife showed her anxiety by pulling up the blinds and then letting them down again to much about the same height they were before, quite unconscious of the absurdity of the proceeding.

"Really, persons like my sister Ellen ought to be labelled dangerous," said Mr. Maitland, in an annoyed voice; "I have not the least doubt that it is in great measure her doing. I certainly hoped to have kept Lorna a little longer. But after her brother's engagement I might have thought the girl would never be satisfied until she was in the same plight."

"You forget, dear," Mrs. Maitland answered, "that we were young once. I don't know why it is," she added, "but I always thought that Lorna and Reginald would some day have been engaged to one another; but I suppose it is all arranged for the best."

"Heaven save the mark!" exclaimed the

husband, "fancy you taking a leaf out of Ellen's book; but there is not a pin to choose between any of you women in these matters."

Mrs. Maitland was a wise woman, and thought it better not to answer, and long before they reached Plymouth the shade of annoyance had passed from her husband's face, and he said—

"I presume it is of little use for parents to offer any opposition in such cases, unless there should be any material objection; and if Mr. O'Connor is likely to be in a position to marry in a few years' time, we shall have to give our consent. As they will be separated for some time we shall, at any rate, be able to prove the strength and purity of their affection."

Now, if the engagement of their children are sources of annoyance, and looked upon in the light of disagreeable, if necessary evils by fathers, it is generally very different with mothers, although they are often the greater

losers eventually, and Mrs. Maitland longed to clasp her daughter to her heart and hear all, so she answered—

“Yes, my dear, if we were to refuse, it would only make Lorna miserable, and ourselves unhappy, and we should have to give our consent at last.”

“But even that would be better than that she should marry a dishonourable or irreligious man. If it should ever have to be put a stop to, the sooner the better.”

“But you surely have no such opinion of Mr. O'Connor?” she replied.

“Oh, no; and I hope that I never may; but before I see him I shall make a point of visiting my old friend General A——, and asking his opinion of the young man. Indeed I think the coachman had better leave me there, and I will join you at Ellen’s afterwards.”

He fancied that Lorna might like to see her mother first; besides which, he hated

scenes, and thought that by this means he might escape one.

There was no time to send a letter, and rural telegraph offices had not been invented in those days, so neither Lorna nor her aunt were expecting them; indeed, Mrs. Surtees was out shopping, but directly the carriage drew up, and Lorna saw who was stepping out, she flew to the door, opened it, and in a few minutes was sitting on the sofa in the dining room, clasped in the arms of her mother, who was proud, though tearful, telling her the story of her happiness.

"But why, my love, did you mention nothing to us about it before?" Mrs. Maitland asked.

"I had nothing to tell," she replied, "he had never said anything to me. I never intended to hide anything from you, but I don't think I was quite sure that I loved him either, until he asked me yesterday morning."

Her mother did not answer, but only kissed her radiant blushing face.

"But what did papa say?" asked Lorna, nestling closer to her mother. "He did not think I had been deceiving him? I never thought it was going to happen, indeed I did not. And you see Charlie was going away so soon; and I could not have said, 'No,' when I should have meant 'Yes' all the time."

Her mother understood it all, as she remembered her own feelings when much about the same age as her blushing daughter, and replied—

"I suppose we must blame you both equally. Your father does not think that you have deceived him, but you took us both so by surprise, that he was rather annoyed at first, especially with your aunt, but it quite passed away before we arrived in Plymouth, and he will be here in a few minutes, when I don't think that he will be very angry with you."

Shortly afterwards there was a ring at the

bell, and before long Mr. Maitland stood in the door trying, but not over successfully, to look very grave. He never had been angry with his little Lorna before, and it was too late to begin now. And as the daughter put her arms around her father's neck and looked up into his face, saying—"You must not be angry with me, papa," the mother knew by her husband's face that his old friend's report had been favourable. Indeed, the General had given O'Connor the very highest character, both as a man and officer, and the bluff soldier had clenched the matter by saying—

"All I can say, Maitland, is that if he had asked me for one of my daughters" (none of the young ladies, as may be supposed, were present at the time) "I should have thought her a precious lucky girl. I hear, too, that he is likely to have a good fortune left him some day, although I would sooner any day that one of my girls should marry an honourable man than a rich one."

"Well, young lady," said her father, taking

her fair young face between his hands, and looking earnestly into her clear and truth-speaking eyes, "what have you to say for yourself? A pretty kettle of fish you and your Aunt Ellen have been cooking together during the last week, and now that it is all settled to your mutual satisfaction, no doubt, you call me in to sanction the proceedings. I suppose you consider it all in accordance with the spirit of the age, and the rights of women, and that fathers are nobodies in these nineteenth century times?"

"Oh, papa!" she exclaimed, "but I can see you are not really angry with me, so it is of no use to pretend."

"There you are, just like your mother, jumping at conclusions; I am sure that I have said nothing to warrant any such inference."

"But I can tell quite well by your face that you are not going to say, 'No.'"

By this time he had managed to struggle to a seat, but Lorna stood behind him, still keeping her arms round his neck.

"But why does my little Lorny wish to leave her home?" he asked, drawing her fondly towards him, "Is it not a happy one, or is she getting tired of it, that she wants to leave it so soon?"

"Oh, no, papa," she answered, "you know it is not that, I do not want to leave you at all—but—"

"But, what? Ay, little one?"

"But—may I see Charlie again before he sails?"

He was relieved from the necessity of answering at once, for at that moment a rap sounded at the door, and the maid brought in a letter for Mr. Maitland, which Lorna saw at once was from O'Connor. After he had perused it, he said—

"Well, little woman, your fate will soon be settled. I wrote a letter to Mr. O'Connor from General A—'s, and he will be here in a few minutes, so you had better make yourselves scarce; and, by the way, you have all an invitation to the general's to dinner to-

night." "Ah," thought his daughter, as she left the room, jumping at a conclusion again, "he would not have accepted the invitation, if he had intended to say 'No.'"

A little later O'Connor arrived, and he soon obtained Mr. Maitland's consent to his engagement with Lorna and to their marriage on his return from the Mediterranean; and then with a quick step and eager heart sought the drawing room, where he found Lorna alone.

On the following Tuesday morning, while Edric Maitland and Reginald A'Bear were sitting talking together in the room at Magdalene College, two ladies were standing on the Hoe at Plymouth waving their handkerchiefs to some one who was waving his in return from the deck of a troop-ship, which was being towed out to sea through the bay beneath them; but there were no tears in the eyes of either, and the younger rather wondered at her hard-heartedness, and though she shed a few that night in the quiet and

privacy of her own room, it was some days before she quite realized the fact that her Charlie had departed, and that the wide sea was separating them for an indefinite period of time.

Little did she, or any one else, imagine the dreadful scenes in which her betrothed would so soon have to take his share. The year before had witnessed the greatest gathering of the peaceful citizens of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues, that the world had ever seen; who then could have dreamt that a deadly but useless war with all its horrors was so close at hand? Certainly not the heart of Lorna Maitland as she watched the white sails of the vessel sink below the southern horizon, nor Charles O'Connor, as with earnest gaze he bade farewell to the ruddy cliffs of bonny Devonshire, and then turned and bravely faced the future.

CHAPTER IX.

NONE, unless they have ever had the same battle to go through, can imagine the nature of Reginald A'Bear's feelings during the next few months. His love for Lorna was not the mere fleeting fancy of a week, which a week would be sufficient to get rid of, but it was the gradual growth of years, and as he had said to her brother, it seemed a part of his very life. For a season he was like a man walking through dry places, seeking rest, and finding none; while Satan assailed him craftily and continually with many and diverse temptations. He determined as far as possible not to think about her at all; but for a time she was more often in his thoughts

than ever. If Montague Mapeley's Bible could have spoken it could have given the best history of the struggles, temptations, and the strong agony of a suffering soul during those first few weeks. Remembering his friend's words that "the best remedy against religious unbelief is moral action," he rightly thought that to this proposition a corollary might be added, viz., that "the best remedy against any mental ailment must be action;" and so, without neglecting his studies, he joined Gerard Lisle in boating and cricket, and as he had a long reach and strong back, seemed likely to excel in the former. During his prolonged stay abroad he had cultivated his musical talents, an inheritance from his mother, and which had received their first impulse from de Mervaille, and when he had nothing else to do would take a difficult piece of music, practice it, or more often would play over some favourite German airs, with impromptu variations; and hardly a week went by without an amateur concert, some-

times a little noisy, taking place in his rooms.

When Easter came, much to his grandmother's disappointment, he had written to say that he was so sorry that he should not be able to come home, as he was obliged to go to Manchester, according to his promise, to see about putting in the window to Mr. Mapeley's memory.

Some of his kinsfolk said that they did not think "Reginald could care very much for his old friends and relations, or he would have made some endeavour to have visited them after so long an absence." But Gerty, who better divined the motive for his conduct took his part, saying—

"That she was quite certain he had only gone from a sense of duty."

"All I can say, then," answered Hugh sarcastically, "is that some people have rather queer notions of duty. I have always been taught that charity begins at home."

“But it doesn’t end there, as some people seem to think,” she rejoined quickly.

Her cousin took no notice of the remark, but continued—

“When Reginald first came up to Oxford, I thought that he really intended to study hard, and try to take a good position; but now he is just as volatile as any boy four years younger, who has only just come up from a public school. I suppose he thinks that he is so well off now” (he had just come of age), “that there is no need for any extra exertion, and so intends to go in for a butterfly existence; but the most extraordinary thing is that Edric Maitland seems to aid and abet him in it.”

This last sentence was said with a look towards Winifred, who quietly went on with her work, while Gerty’s generous nature fired up, and without a moment’s hesitation she replied—

“What an ungenerous remark! I am quite

certain that Reggie will never live a butterfly existence, as you are pleased to call it. Of course we all know that you intend to be Lord Chancellor, or Prime Minister, or Oliver Cromwell the Second in some future republic, and very proud we shall be to talk of our relative, the Dictator: although I am sure that I hope we may never live to see the day. Then of course you can issue an edict forbidding all innocent amusements, and ordering the students at Oxford not to boat and play cricket, and will send down a regiment of dragoons to see that it is obeyed. For my part I don't see why people can't play cricket and learn Greek at the same time. Why? If the Greeks had known anything about cricket, a cricket match would have been part of the programme of the Isthmian games."

"I don't exactly see the force of that last sentence," answered her cousin, who had winced a little at the first words. You remind me rather of a speaker at a missionary meet-

ing who talked about reading the Bible with one hand and blowing the bellows with the other. But really, if I were you, I should put such valuable sentiments into print. I should think that the editor of the 'Bath Chronicle' would be glad of them; such invaluable common sense ought not to be lost to the rising generation. I must say that you have grown wonderfully enthusiastic all of a sudden."

"Oh, yes, and we poor women should never be allowed to be enthusiastic. No feelings, nothing but hard reason. We should have to dress by Act of Parliament, and be allowed to read nothing but Euclid and blue books."

As soon as Hugh had left (feeling much more annoyed than he chose to show, for he had always been rather jealous of his cousin who had once come between him and the A'Bear estates, and who now was rich while he was poor, besides having a particular objection to Gerty, of all people, taking his part), Winny,

who had kept silent during the discussion, said—

“I think it is a great pity you argue so with Hugh, it does no good, and only makes things more disagreeable than they need be.”

“I can’t help it,” she replied, “I cannot stay quiet when any one is speaking evil of my friends, especially when they are unable to defend themselves. I can’t think why Hugh should find so much fault with Reggie as he has lately.”

And what meanwhile was taking place at Malta and Sandstone? Forced to be separated for a time, O’Connor and Lorna were finding their chief solace in letters, while she had spent the summer in Ireland, where she had won the hearts of all her future relatives; and not the least of Richard Heffernan, O’Connor’s eccentric old uncle, a Belfast merchant. For this journey Reginald had been very thankful, as it had enabled him to time his visit to Burrscombe during her

absence ; but even then to visit all their old haunts was a hard trial.

When he arrived at Kingsbridge, leaving his luggage at the King's Arms to be called for, he walked on towards Sandstone, and in less than an hour was in the arms of his dear old granny, who was never tired of looking at his handsome face and noble bearing, as she remarked his likeness to his grandfather at the time of their marriage, more than fifty years ago ; and remembered the pride with which she had watched his father Hugh, as he had stood by her side on the day he came of age, when receiving the congratulations of the Somersetshire tenantry ; and earnestly and often were her hands clasped together that evening, as she silently prayed that he might be preserved for a happier future than his ill-fated father.

A month soon passed ; and then, after promising to spend the whole of the winter vacation at Burrscombe, while Edric journeyed

with him as far as Crewe on his way to Ireland to fetch his sister home again, Reginald left to join a reading party at Windermere, thinking that he had carefully concealed his secret from all eyes: but one person had partly divined it, and that was Mrs. Maitland. She had noticed that although Reginald would talk of her daughter's engagement when the matter was mentioned, yet that he had never once introduced the subject himself, and that her son also seemed to avoid the subject when his friend was in the room.

There was another, too, who had begun to ask herself the question, "Why Reginald should continually seem to avoid her, and should time his visit to South Devon when she was away, and leave again as soon as she was returning?" and Lorna felt hurt and sorry, and wondered at the reason. And, then, by degrees it began to dawn upon her that perhaps he had loved her all through the long years he had been away, as she called to mind

many happy days they had spent together, and many scenes in which they had each played a part; especially the day when she had found him sleeping in the old familiar spot, and the farewell kiss at their last parting, when she had promised never to forget him. And then she took out all the letters that she had received from him during his stay abroad (for she had not burnt hers), and read them through again; and she saw now the meaning of some expressions, and understood that he had loved her during those three long years of absence. He had written her a letter in answer to the one which she had sent announcing her engagement, kind as ever; but now that she read it again, it seemed very different to the rest.

“He thinks that I have been false to him,” she sadly reflected. “He is so true himself that he will despise me now; and so he avoids me. But perhaps he loves me still—or hates me now instead?” So she questioned with herself.

She would not willingly have hurt an insect; but to have grieved and hurt, however unintentionally, the companion of her childhood, who had been almost more of a brother to her even than Edric, was more than she could bear to think of; her poor little heart beat quicker and quicker, and at last the restrained tears forced their way, and she lay her head on the table and wept long and grievously. It was thus far the greatest trouble she had ever known, and one which it seemed hopeless to attempt to avert. Happily her mother found her in this position, and by degrees drew from her the cause of her excessive grief.

“I cannot bear that Reggie should think I have been false to him,” she cried. “I never knew that he loved me except as a sister—he never really told me so—and now he avoids me and despises me—perhaps hates me. When he went away, I told him that I should not be a bit different when he came back—but I did not know what he meant then—and I am sure

that I feel just the same towards him as ever." And the little maiden lay in her mother's loving arms, and sobbed as if her heart would break.

Mrs. Maitland had been afraid that these thoughts might enter into her dear child's mind, and so was in some degree prepared for the emergency; but it was some time before she could administer any real comfort to her daughter. She clearly saw the danger of these suppositions to her happiness and peace of mind, but was far too honest to attempt to disprove their truth.

"My dear child," she said, "you are not to blame in the matter, and I am sure that Reginald does not think so either; he often spoke of you when here in the kindest way. And if he avoids you now, it is only because in the present state of his feelings towards you he thinks it is the most honourable course of conduct to pursue. But he is coming home at Christmas, and then I expect

that he will have got over it, and we shall find him just the same as ever."

"But what can I do, mother dear?" she answered. "He has had so many troubles all his life; and then that I should be the cause of another. But I never knew that he loved me—and I cannot love Reggie and Charlie, too, in the same way—I cannot give Charlie up now."

"No, my child, of course you cannot. You have pledged your troth to Charlie, and I am sure that Reginald would be the last person in the world to expect it. Why, if you were to offer your heart to him now he would refuse it."

"But then, mother dear, I am keeping him away from his home, and Mrs. A'Bear can't live very long now, and, of course, Reginald would like to see as much of her as possible. I wish I could write and explain everything to him, and say how sorry I am to have caused him any grief."

"No doubt you would, my child; but that

you cannot do, as Reginald has said nothing about it to any one; and, after all, we may possibly be wrong in our suppositions. The only thing to be done is to let events take their course, and it will all come right in the end. There is many another girl in the world besides my little Lorna, who is worthy of him, and he will be losing his heart to one of them before long."

This last thought seemed to give her more consolation, for she said, with a much happier voice—

"Oh, yes! I hope he will. And I know one who is very fond of him, and would make him such a loving wife. Gerty told me years ago that she had always loved him better than any of her cousins; and from what she told me at Bath, now I think of it, I fancy she must be of much about the same opinion still."

Soon afterwards her mother rose to leave, as it was nearly tea-time, saying that "she had better tear up the letters, as they would

only keep her in mind of what she had much rather try and forget as quickly as possible."

"But, mother dear," she answered, "I am afraid that I shan't be able to forget all about it directly;" and after a moment's hesitation, she added, "Do you think that I ought to tell Charlie, for we promised never to keep any secrets from one another?"

"No, my love, I think you had better not say anything about it at present. Some day you can tell him; but at the present, at the distance he is away, it might make him jealous, and possibly cause estrangement between them, which I am sure you would not wish."

After Mrs. Maitland had closed the door, her daughter said to herself with a sigh, "I am sure the old proverb is wrong about 'great ease and little crosses' before marriage; with me it is going to be 'great crosses and little ease.'" She knew not the truth of what she was saying, that this was, after all, only the beginning of troubles.

About a week afterwards, she took the packet of letters, placed them in a box—which once had contained chess-men, long since destroyed—tied them to a fragment of the slaty cliff, walked to the edge of a rock, and threw them into the deep pool beneath her feet. The water was so clear that when it had sunk to the bottom it could be plainly seen lying amidst the long leaves of dark green seaweed. She stood and looked at it for some time, and almost wished that the water had not been so deep that she might have dragged it out again; and as she walked away did not know whether to be glad or sorry that the deed was done. But it was a great relief to her to know that her mother knew all about it. A little later in the year she was walking near the place, and as it was very low tide curiosity led her to the pool again. It was nearly empty, and to her astonishment the box was still there. With the end of her parasol she managed to draw it to the edge of the pool, but when, with some

difficulty, it had been opened, the letters were found to have been reduced to a mass of undistinguishable pulp ; but she kept the box as a strange memento of the past.

CHAPTER X.

WHEN Reginald returned to Oxford, after the long vacation, it was with the renewed determination to make the best use of his time and opportunities, upon which new sign of the times Hugh mentally pronounced his judgment, "That it was a mere flash in the pan." Where he had made one friend Reginald had made ten during his much shorter stay at the University. The fact he could not help observing, but put it down to his cousin's much larger command of money. There was another reason, however, which he failed to recognise, viz., that Reginald had a kinder heart and more unselfish nature, and the power or gift of attracting friends which he

did not possess himself. Hugh, as well as his future brother-in-law, had already made their mark in the class lists ; and he was the most fluent and accomplished speaker in the discussions at the Union, where he rather startled undergraduate Conservatism by his advanced Liberal opinions.

The term soon passed away, and once again there was to be a large gathering at Burrscombe, for Reginald's uncle and aunt, and all their party, were coming with him from Bath to keep their Christmas in South Devon ; and greatly did O'Connor, in his Maltese quarters, envy them their visit.

Two of the number who were to take part in this *réunion*, as may be supposed, were looking forward to the meeting with very mixed feelings, and were not sorry that their first interview would take place in the presence of so many ; for while Reginald was anxious to hide from Lorna how truly and deeply he had loved her, she was equally desirous of concealing from him that she had divined his secret:

On the evening of his arrival Reginald unpacked a box which he had so carefully filled and closed almost a year before at Nice, but had never the heart to open since, and gave to the ladies the presents which he had bought for them in Rome just previous to Mr. Mapeley's final illness. To Winnifred a set of carved Neapolitan coral which suited well her dark hair ; to Lorna and Gerty each a set of Castellini's beautiful Roman mosaic work ; to Mrs. Maitland and his aunt, brooches and bracelets of solid gold carved in the same city ; and to his dear grandmother a lovely cameo brooch, upon which was carved in relief a likeness of himself. All were well pleased with his presents, and Lorna not the least, as it proved to her that, whatever might be the nature of Reginald's feelings towards her, they still were kind ; and they were soon on the old familiar footing.

But it was dangerous for them both—dangerous to talk over old times, and happy seasons long passed away ; those times when they had

walked hand in hand in joyful and anticipating childhood ; when he had led Silvertail through the green and flowery lanes, or along the sandy beach, when teaching her to ride ; when for hours they had sat together and read from the same page in the well-remembered nook ; when he had twined among her golden locks the lovely convolvulus, that grew in luxurious abundance upon the shore ; when they had been almost more than brother and sister to one another.

It was perilous to their happiness and peace of mind, and Reginald soon found that the sight of her whom he had once loved so well had recalled all those emotions into his heart which he had hoped were killed, and he awoke to the bitter consciousness that he loved her still ; but happily an incident revealed to him the danger he was in, for it disclosed to him the fact that his secret was no longer hid from Lorna.

It so happened during one evening in the first week of 1853, and the second of their

visit, that while the three elder ladies were talking together on one side of the fire, and Mr. Maitland and Reginald's uncle were discussing the Eastern question on the other, while Winnifred and her brother, Edric and Gerty, were attempting a quartette around the piano, Lorna and Reginald alone were disengaged at the time ; and, as is often the case, whether by chance, or by a species of mental electricity, they were thinking of one another. Her hands were busily engaged in tatting, an accomplishment which while it employs the fingers allows the mind without let or hindrance to be occupied on other matters, and with some kindred occupations seems to hold among women much about the same position as smoking among men, *i.e.*, either as a preventive or provocative of thought. In this instance it would seem to have been a stimulant, for she was thinking whether Reginald had quite conquered his love for her. Neither by word nor deed had he ever given her the slightest reason to suppose that he held any

different sentiments towards her than towards his cousins, and she, too, had been equally circumspect; yet, she could not altogether analyze the nature of her feelings towards him. They were not the same as her love towards her Charlie, nor were they precisely the same as her fraternal affection for her brother Edric, but they were something between the two. She had no intention of doing wrong, but they were dangerous thoughts, such as have laid the foundation in many another of hours and days, and months and years—aye, even of a life—of misery or unhappiness.

And what were Reginald's emotions at the time? Lorna was looking at her work; but her face showed plainly that her thoughts were far away, with his old friend Charlie he supposed. As every one was pre-occupied, he was earnestly gazing at her. She was lovely as ever, and was wearing the mosaic ornaments which he had given her, bought under so much happier auspices; but there was a

shade of sadness and perplexity upon her countenance caused, doubtless, by the uncertainty of the future. He was wondering at the sources of that power—all unconsciously, as he thought—which she possessed over him; and mentally resolved that when the vacation was over he would not return to Burrscombe until he had finally conquered, even should it cause him to leave the place for ever. Had he but considered that there was one, an enemy, at his elbow, and at hers also for that matter, he would not have indulged in such reveries, but would have turned them into another channel; for in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the thought flashed through his mind (for even then there were wars and rumours of wars flying through the air) that O'Connor might never return, so that after all she might be his. At that very instant she lifted her head and, as their eyes met, the secret of each was read; for while Lorna learnt that Reginald loved her still, he became aware that she was cognizant of the fact.

As Reginald rose almost immediately afterwards and walked towards the piano, hating himself for the cruel and unrighteous thought—involuntary though it was, and no sooner listened to than spurned with horror—willing that his right eye should have been plucked out if what had taken place should not have happened—Lorna, while she went on mechanically with her tatting, was trembling with suppressed agitation, feeling much about the same as when she had been standing with O'Connor in the doorway of the ball room—and it was less than a year since he had sailed. Happily she never really knew, and he had never cause to suspect it, but her love for him for a season trembled in the balance. What might have been the consequences had Reginald A'Bear been an unscrupulous and designing man it is impossible to say. The question shall remain unanswered. The sad and melancholy history of many a life; of mental diseases which have baffled the most skilful physician;

of wrecked hopes; of biting remorse; of deadly sin; of dying souls; of secrets locked in the bosom but unable to be whispered to any but the Almighty, and sometimes not even to Him—let these point the moral and adorn the tale.

By the time the singing was over, while Reginald had recovered his outward calmness, and congratulated the singers on their performance, Lorna was sitting close to her mother, whose quick eyes soon noticed her daughter's agitation and excessive paleness; and when she observed that Reginald and Lorna never spoke again, but seemed mutually to avoid one another during the rest of the evening, her maternal instincts were alarmed. But had she known all, her mind might have been at rest. That evening, which might have been the commencement of much unhappiness, had given the death-blow to Reginald A'Bear's love for her daughter—the evil by the grace of God had been turned into good;

a revelation of Satan's power over a naturally depraved heart had been made to him, and he feared greatly.

That night, by the side of the same bed, in the same spot where as a happy and guileless child he had so often knelt, he prayed long and earnestly; and his wrestling was not in vain; when he rose from his knees the evil spirit had departed, and a ministering angel was standing in his place, keeping guard over one who had been tempted but had conquered.

After breakfast next morning he determined to carry out at once the resolution he had formed over night, and walked down to the Vicarage with the intention of asking Lorna to take a walk with him, for he felt that the best thing to do would be to explain everything to her in the most open manner. When he entered the Vicarage, the first person whom he met was Mrs. Maitland; and after wishing her good morning, he said—"Where is Lorna? I have come down for the express purpose of

asking her to come for a walk on the sands ; we have not had a walk together for more than four years, and I have an important piece of news to tell her."

Mrs. Maitland, remembering what she had observed on the previous evening, could not help for a moment feeling a little uneasy, and her countenance plainly revealed it. Reginald, who observed and understood, answered immediately, gently and calmly, "You must not begin to mistrust me now, Lorna shall tell you all about it when we return."

These were the only words that ever passed between them on the subject, and the mother, grieved at the injustice of her suspicions that her confidence in his honour should have wavered even for an instant, went at once to call her daughter. "Lorna," she said, "Reginald wants you to take a walk with him on the sands, he has something particular to tell you."

"Oh mother dear," she replied, addressing her as she had been accustomed from her

childhood, "what shall I do?" while a deep blush spread over her face, and seemed to tingle in every vein.

"Why, my darling child, of course you will go and walk with him," her mother answered; "he says that I must not begin to mistrust him now, and indeed I think it will perhaps be better for both of you when you have had a good talk—anything is better than reticence in such matters."

She went and put on her jacket and hat, feeling very uncomfortable, which made her much longer than usual over the operation, but was somewhat reassured when she saw that the look of the previous evening had passed away from his face. When they had walked together a little way, and she had given him back a letter which he had received that morning from O'Connor, he said—"I had hoped to have kept my secret from you; but I learnt last night that you had discovered it, and I have been so sorry ever since, for I fear it may be the cause of trouble to you—

but I shall only be here for another fortnight, and then I shall not return again until—either my love for you is a thing of the past, or—until you are married to my old friend Charlie.”

“Oh, no!” she rejoined quickly, “I did not learn it last night; when I saw that you seemed to avoid me, and only came to Burrscombe when I was away, and left again directly I was coming home again, I could not help asking myself the reason why you did not wish to meet me. But Reggie, I never meant to be false to you; I never knew that you loved me, except as a sister. Perhaps if you had told me, it might have been different; but you were away such a long time; and then Charlie came, and I seemed to love him almost before I had begun to think about it. You won’t be angry with him, Reggie?” she continued, pleadingly, while her voice trembled a little; “I am sure that he never knew that you loved me. Can we not be the same as we were before? I

cannot bear to think that it is all my fault—that you are keeping away from Burrscombe—cannot we be like brother and sister again ?” she added timidly, after a moment’s hesitation.

“I am not the least angry with you or Charlie,” he responded, quietly, “and I hope some day we may be like brother and sister again ; but at present it will be better for us both that I should go away for a time. I do not think that either you or Charlie had the least intention of being false to me ; it is entirely my own fault, and I must bear the consequences.”

They had now reached a rock, or rather a ridge of rocks, which they both knew well, for Lorna had stood upon the further point when she had thrown his letters into the sea.

“It was seated here,” he said, pointing to the nearer end, “that I first awoke to the fact that you were something more to me than a sister.” And he told her the history of that day and of many a day since, especially

of that hour during which he could have killed her had they met; and though she shuddered, she believed it not.

"You see I cannot get rid of all these thoughts and feelings in a day, but by degrees, I suppose, they will fade away, and you may seem to me as a sister once again."

"But now that I have made my confessions," he resumed in a more cheery voice, "we won't thrash the dead straw any longer, as I have something to tell you, and you shall take the news home to your father, for I know that it will give him great pleasure to hear it—I have made up my mind to be a clergyman."

"Oh! papa will be so glad," she exclaimed.

"Yes, I know he will; I first thought about it when attending on Mr. Mapeley, and although he said little about it, I often felt that he was trying to lead me on to consider the matter seriously; during the last term I fully determined upon it. Not so many young men as formerly are taking holy orders,

and as I have had a good deal of experience of the sorrows and troubles of life, perhaps I may be able to give some small comfort to others. And then, too, I am very well off, and so need not look to my profession for my bread. At the same time, I hope that I have some higher motives."

"I quite long to tell papa," she answered, "for I know that he will be so immensely pleased."

As they were now at some distance from home, Reginald proposed that they should return, and they commenced to retrace their steps; and as he gave her a description of some of the many scenes which he had witnessed abroad, all restraint gradually passed away, and they talked as unreservedly as ever; so that by the time the Vicarage was reached again, they had made some considerable progress towards regaining their former footing as brother and sister. When they warmly shook hands at the Vicarage gates, and turned to go to their respective homes,

it was with the mutual feeling that while they were glad that the walk was over, they were equally glad that it had taken place, and during the remainder of the vacation they no longer tried to avoid one another.

As soon as Lorna entered the house, she sought out her mother, and as she kissed her, said, and the anxious mother saw that the cloud had passed away—

“I will tell you all about it to-night. Reggie and I have had such a long chat; but where’s papa? as I have a piece of such good news to tell him.”

“In the study; but why may I not be allowed to share the good news, too?”

“Oh yes, you shall know, directly; but I want to tell papa first,” she answered, as she left the room.

She found her father hard at work at the not unfrequent task of putting an old sermon to the grindstone, and making it new again. He took a very different view of the old sermon’s controversy to what was perhaps the opinion

of some of his flock, considering that it was an advantage both to himself and to them that they should hear occasionally the warmer, fresher, and more enthusiastic productions of his youthful pen, in the place of the deeper and more finished compositions of his maturer years.

When Lorna entered the room, he looked up from his work, and she said at once—

“Papa, I have such a piece of good news to tell you, but you must try and guess what it is!”

“A piece of good news, and I am to guess what it is, and by your face I should say that it must be a piece of very good news indeed,” he replied. “Well, I suppose that you have only one idea of good news at the present moment, and Mr. O’Connor must be on the way to England.”

“Now, papa,” she answered, “when shall I ever teach you to call him ‘Charlie?’ Mamma learnt it long ago; but really you are just the very worst pupil anybody ever had. But

you are quite wrong this time, and must, guess again."

"Ah, of course," he answered, "you womenkind have only one notion of good news and that is marrying and giving in marriage. Let me see; perhaps it is Reginald and Gertrude Sinclair, for I cannot think of any one else."

"I wish it were," she responded, "but you are still a very long way off."

"Well then, it must be your Aunt Ellen; as she has settled for you, perhaps she has been taking a private leaf out of her own book."

"No, it has nothing whatever to do with marrying."

"Perhaps, then, you have come to tell me that dinner is ready, which would be a piece of very good news indeed, as I am remarkably hungry this morning."

His smiling daughter shook her head.

"It surely cannot be that you have finished the pair of slippers which you began to work for

me just about a year ago?" he slyly asked, pointing to a very dilapidated pair in the corner of the study.

"Now, papa, you are not trying to find out; you know it could not be that."

"Well, I am fairly puzzled, and give it up. The only thing else I can think of is that coals, perhaps, are cheaper, for really your mother, by the way she heaps them on the fire, must seem to think that we have a private mine somewhere under the glebe-land."

"No, papa, you must not give up for a little longer, but as you have been very good, I will give you a hint. It is something about Reginald, and something that you will be very glad to hear."

"Something about Reginald!" the vicar exclaimed, all attention in a moment, "something about Reginald that I shall be very glad to hear; you puzzle me more than ever. You say that it is nothing about his going to be married, and I can think of nothing else likely to happen to him just at present."

As Lorna saw that her father was now really anxious to know, she would not tantalize him any longer, but said—

“Reggie has made up his mind to be a clergyman, and he wished me to be the bearer of the good news to you.”

“That is good news indeed !” he replied, rising from his seat ; “is he in the drawing room ?”

“No,” she answered, “but they are all coming here this evening.”

“It is indeed good news” he said again ; “you are quite right in supposing that it would give me pleasure ; I have not heard anything which has given me so much satisfaction for a long time. I don’t know any one more likely to do good. If only Edric would follow his example,” he added, “but I don’t like to urge him.”

Almost immediately afterwards the dinner bell rung, and Mr. Maitland during the whole of dinner was constantly talking over the good news which Lorna had just told him.

while Mrs. Maitland, as soon as the intelligence was communicated to her, was hardly less pleased than her husband.

That same evening, Mr. Maitland and his former pupil had a long conversation in the study; and after he had left, and Lorna and her mother had retired, Mr. Maitland said to his son, as he was preparing to follow their example—

“I never knew any one who has so wonderfully matured during the last few years as Reginald A’Bear. There is the same freshness about him as ever, but with the thoughts of a man of thirty. He is indeed a noble fellow, and I am so glad he is going to take holy orders, for he will be a strength to the Church wherever he may be placed.”

“Yes,” Edric answered, “and no one is less aware of the fact than Reginald himself. I know of no one at the present moment who strives more earnestly to live by the law of his conscience, and he has had some rather hard trials lately.”

At much about the same time, upon equally sure premises, his mother and sister had arrived at a similar conclusion as they were talking over the morning's conversation. And, while Mrs. Maitland could almost have wished (it would have been so much better for many reasons, some of them rather worldly) that Reginald could have been her future son-in-law, Lorna hoped that Gertrude Sinclair might some day take the place which she had so long occupied in his heart. "Then," she thought, "I shall be quite happy, and shall be able to tell Charlie all about it."

CHAPTER XI.

THE day before they left, as it was a fine morning, a ride, long talked about, was determined upon, and a cavalcade of six started from Burrscombe to try and ride from Hope to Salcombe by the cliff, one of the most lovely excursions in England; Gerty being mounted on a fine young chestnut horse called Sultan, her especial favourite. Jabez Steer had been sent forward with some provisions, but the old man had been rather late, and they quickly passed him finishing his breakfast off a hunch of bread and butter and a slice of cheese.

“What is the time, your honour?” he said to Reginald, with his usual salute as they came up.

“ Nearly eleven o’clock, and unless you stir your stumps and Molly’s shanks a little faster, we shall have to go without our lunch. I am afraid you must have been rather lazy this morning.”

“ Has your honour ever read Leigh Hunt’s essay about getting up of a cold morning ?” he drily answered.

“ No, or if I have, I don’t remember it.”

“ Then, if your honour will peruse it you will find there’s a deal of philosophy in the matter, that there are many good reasons for staying in bed of a cold morning, which

‘ Sweetly recommend themselves
Unto our gentle senses,’

according to the poet, *i.e.*, if you have no particular reasons for getting up.”

“ What an old Sybarite,” he replied, preparing to ride on, while Hugh observed—

“ Look at the extravagant disciple of Epicurus, eating cheese with his bread and butter.”

“ The fault is with them as parted them in

the first instance," he quickly retorted with a chuckle.

And while Reginald laughed heartily at the *repartee*, Edric shouted back—

"Well done, Jabez; that's one to you," and mightily pleased with himself was the old fellow at having got the better of the young collegian.

"I really don't see the point of the joke which seems to tickle you so much," Hugh remarked after thinking for a minute or two.

"That comes of you living all your life in towns," his cousin replied. "The cheese was a skim-milk Dorset, and as the cream had all been taken away, Jabez was philosophically returning it in the form of butter."

"Ah, well," he observed, joining in the laugh against himself, "I must confess that the old fellow had the better of me there."

"Yes, and there's far more in Jabez Steer's noddle than in the heads of three parts of those who make fun of him, and they generally come off second best; he has tripped

me up many a time in much about the same way. I remember a young fellow at Kingsbridge who attempted to trot out the old man for the amusement of the company. Jabez let him go on for some time, and then said, in that dry way of his, touching his hat with a most imperturbable countenance—‘Your godfathers and godmothers seem to have done their duty by you, sir.’ ‘How so?’ he said. ‘Why, sir?’ he answered, ‘by teaching you the vulgar tongue.’ You should have seen the young fellow’s face, but he did not try it on again, except to say, ‘We are sharp this morning.’ To which the old man rejoined again, as he gave his donkey a crack with the stick, ‘Then, sir, you shouldn’t play with edged tools.’ ”

By this time they had reached Milton sands, and going to the edge of the water cantered merrily along, and then over the Down to Hope, where Reginald, Lorna and Gerty stayed for a few minutes to see old Mahla Jarvis, who had quite taken to her bed

during the last few months. They found her very feeble, but glad to see them, and while Reginald hung up one of Dr. Marsh's Scripture texts at the foot of the bed, the girls fed the old soul with some calves-foot jelly they had brought with them. As he wished her good-bye, she whispered—for to such a state had the strong voice fallen—as she affectionately pressed his hand, “Yeu’ll never zee old Mahla again. It’s bin a long pilgrimage, but I’m nearing my home at last, and I’m safe. Thank the Lord for His mercies. He’s bin very gude to me, and may the Lord bless yeu for coming to zee me again. And will yeu tell the gude lady to Burrscombe that its all owing to the Testimint, wi’ the beautifule large print; bless the Lord.” He readily promised, and she followed them with her blessings as they left the house.

When they had mounted their steeds again they cantered briskly by Inner Hope, but did not catch up the rest of the party for some time, whom they found waiting for them in

the road, close to the farm-house whither Reginald had been taken as a child after the shipwreck. Starting again, they turned to the right, and, after some little difficulty, reached the edge of the cliff, and looked down upon the spot where the ill-fated "Cadmus" had been wrecked; and then, by a narrow winding path, reached the shore, and as the wind was blowing rather sharply, it was with some difficulty that the horses were brought to face the noise of the wind and waves, and to dash through the drifting flakes of foam, and across the narrow strip of shingle to the other side; and then they all scampered up the opposite hill as fast as the horses could take them.

"This is delightful," exclaimed Gerty, when, with some difficulty, they had stopped their horses again. "How I wish we were not going back to Bath to-morrow; and then to have nothing but those horrid old streets, and gardens, and assembly rooms."

"Never content, as usual, Gerty," remarked

her cousin Hugh, with a sardonic laugh; "if you were to live here always you would soon be grumbling at the horrid old roads, detestable sands, and monotonous sea, and would be longing for the Bath assembly rooms, with its flattery, finery, and flirtations."

"Fancy, calling the sea monotonous," chimed in Edric. "Why, the sea and sky are the only parts of a landscape that are different each day you look at them;" while Gerty exclaimed—

"There you are quite wrong; if I had my own choice, I should like to live twenty miles from a railway, and ten miles from gas; I am sure I don't care a bit for flattery, finery, and flirtations, as you are pleased to call it; the flattery goes in at one ear and out of the other. I am sure that I often wish men would try and talk a little sense sometimes, but they seem to think that we poor women can only understand nonsense; although for the matter of that, I don't believe half of them can speak anything else themselves.

And I think it is very unkind of you to call me a flirt. If men will act in such a silly manner they must expect to be paid back in their own coin. I quite agree with what Nanny said the other day, 'that a lot of young gentlemen now-a-days weren't no more good rearing than Michaelmas chickens, coz they never comed to no good.'"

"I believe, if I remember rightly," her cousin rejoined, "that the word really used by your authority was 'gentlefolk,' which last syllable being allied to the Latin 'vulgus,' will apply equally to both sexes;" while Reginald said—

"I hope, Gerty, you do not include the present company in the category of Michaelmas chickens?"

"Of course I don't," she answered; "but Hugh ought not to say such things, as I am obliged to defend myself."

By this time, after partly breaking down a wall in order to pass through, they had reached a part where only one horse could

very safely go abreast, and as Sultan was rather skittish, Reginald dismounted and led it, sending his own cob on in front, whom he knew was much too wise to get into any danger; and, as it so happened, they were behind the rest.

"Reggie," she said, "it is not right for Hugh to call me a flirt. I am sure I am not one."

"He did not really mean it," he answered, "he only said it to torment you. You must not be too angry with him, he can't help it altogether. You see he sticks so hard to his books, that he does not take enough exercise, and so his liver sometimes gets the better of him."

"All I can say, then, is that I wish he would leave his liver at home with his books when he comes out for a ride, for he often makes me say things I am very sorry for afterwards; but I can't help it when he attacks me. I shouldn't care a bit if I never went to a ball again. I like them when I am there well

enough; but next day I often wonder what I found to enjoy so much. You don't think there is any harm in wearing pretty and becoming things, do you?"

"Oh, no, certainly not," he answered. "I don't believe in a religion of ugliness, and never shall; the petals of a flower and the wings of a butterfly teach us better than that. What you have to be careful of is that you don't think too much about them, that, as old Seneca says, 'your gold is no more to you than earthenware.'"

"You know, Reggie," she said again, "I wish to be very different to what I am, and I make very good resolutions, but I find them so hard to carry out; and then I have no one to talk to, as somehow or other Winny and I, although we are very fond of one another, are so different in disposition that we have never made confidantes of each other."

"Poor little woman! So you, too, are beginning to discover at last that your doll is stuffed with saw-dust," he replied, turning

round and smiling at her earnestness. "You are not the first person by a long way who has made good resolutions, and found them very hard to carry out; but it is a great point gained to wish to be different, although we must not be content with merely wishing. Why don't you make a confidante of Lorna? I daresay she will like to have some one to talk and write to about Charles O'Connor. Fancy my merry little cousin having troubles as well as the rest of us; but I can't think they can be anything so very serious."

"Oh, but I have many more troubles than people think," she said, with a sigh and a shake of the head.

They had now reached the only dangerous part of the ride, where the road, after skirting the edge of the cliff, made a sudden turn to the left. There was a rough, stone wall above them; then the narrow path, from which the hill-side gradually sloped to the verge of the precipice, a few yards off; below which the sea was tumbling over the

rocks in angry breakers. The horse was young, and began to show signs of fright as they neared the edge of the cliff and the rather sharp angle which they had to turn before reaching safer ground again, where they were expecting to meet Jabez and the provisions ; but as Reginald had firm hold of his head, they were neither in the least alarmed. But just when they had arrived at the most dangerous part of the path, a brace of partridges, disturbed by the cavalcade in front, suddenly whirred over the wall, just in front of Sultan's head. This made him rear, and then plunge blindly forward in extreme terror, dragging Reginald with him to the very verge of the cliff, and for a short time they were in a position of extreme peril. Had either of them lost their heads, Gerty's fate at any rate would have been sealed. If Reginald had let go of the rein, Sultan would immediately have plunged headlong over the cliff on to the rocks below, and both the horse and his fair rider would have been

dashed to pieces ; while, if she had commenced to scream, or violently to pull the reins in frantic terror, no human power could have availed to avert the catastrophe, for two sides of the triangle on which the horse was plunging were formed by the edge of the cliff.

“For God’s sake, Gerty,” Reginald exclaimed, “keep on the saddle, and don’t scream.”

She was a fair horsewoman, and though she closed her eyes for a moment, obeyed him implicitly. For a few seconds they were both in extreme peril, and their fate hung in the balance as the horse reared, and then plunged violently forward at Reginald, who was standing between him and the cliff but little more than a yard off ; but happily he preserved his footing, and then exerting all his strength, foot by foot, and yard by yard, he forced Sultan back on to the path again, and the next minute they had turned the point, and were in safety.

Gerty was at first too agitated to speak ;

but still she heard her cousin say, as he stroked Sultan's neck, and she gloried in the praise, "Well done, Gerty, you are a brave little woman ; no one could have acted better ; if you had not sat perfectly quiet we must both have been killed. Most girls would have screamed, or tried to throw themselves off, or done something equally absurd. You must have more in that merry little pate than half of them after all."

"Take me off, Reggie," she said almost immediately afterwards, "I feel so faint and giddy."

"Try to stay on a little longer," he answered. "You can get off in a minute, as I see Jabez and the rest just below ; and don't say anything about it, it would only spoil their ride."

"What a time you have been," said Winnifred to her cousin when they came up ; "and what's the matter with Gerty, she looks as if she were going to faint ?"

"Oh, it's nothing to be alarmed about,"

Reginald answered, as he lifted her off; "Sultan was startled by a brace of partridges flying in front of his nose, and kicked about a bit, and Gerty was a little frightened, but if you will give her a glass of sherry she will soon be all right again; in the meantime I will put her saddle on the old cob, and I think you might fire a thirteen inch mortar under his nose without disturbing his equanimity."

As it was evident that time would not serve them to go the whole journey, and Gerty complained of a head-ache, they returned to Burrscombe through Malborough. When they arrived home she went upstairs, and did not come down again until after dinner, and as Winny sat by the side of the sofa in their room, bathing her forehead with eau-de-Cologne, she gave her the history of the occurrence, and finished by saying, "I shall always feel that Reggie saved my life at the risk of his own. I can never forget how he looked when he was standing at the edge

of the cliff, and Sultan rearing against him ; so calm and brave."

She kept her word, and never did forget it.

Winny bent down and kissed her, and though she said nothing, thought the more.

Lorna also received a full account of the transaction before the week was over, and when she had read through the long letter, exclaimed—

"Mother dear, I am sure it will all come true now."

"What will come true, my dear?" said Mrs. Maitland, looking up from her knitting.

"Why, about Gerty and Reginald," she rejoined, passing over the letter for her perusal.

CHAPTER XII.

WHEN Lorna and Reginald met again in the next vacation, after the first sensations of shyness had worn off, although not very often alone together, they found that they could meet on the old footing; for while he felt that he had conquered, and could be in her company without experiencing any bitter thoughts and heart aches, she was equally glad to know that in gaining her Charlie's love, she had not lost a brother, nor had O'Connor lost his oldest friend in winning her.

One cloud, however, had no sooner passed away, than a second commenced to throw its gloomy shadow o'er her path, and o'er that of many another also; in some cases,

never in this life to grow again into the perfect day, for quicker and quicker were events, which are now historical, coming to a crisis in the East. Wars and rumours of wars were sounding louder and louder every day, and Charlie was half way there already. No formal rupture, indeed, had yet taken place between the East and West, but it was evident that the end of peace, and the beginning of war, was hourly drawing nearer; for arsenal and dockyard, night and day, were resounding with preparations for the contest; while troops were being moved towards the seat of war, already raging fiercely in Moldavia and Wallachia. The disaster at Sinope, especially, had roused England to a pitch of fierce anger to know that the outrage had been committed almost within the hearing of her men of war; and as Lorna heard the conversation all around, her heart grew cold as ice, and she feared that she would never see her Charlie again.

Then came that pregnant month between the 10th of March, 1854, when the formal treaty was made with the Sultan, and the 10th of April, when the alliance, defensive and offensive, was concluded between England and France. On the following day the Emperor of Russia declared war, and after forty years of almost uninterrupted peace with the rest of Europe, England to assist the nation which she had helped to cripple at Navarino, was once again at war, and her last great enemy was her present ally, and her former friend was now her foe. Such is war! To satisfy the ambition or caprice of one man, how many precious lives would be sacrificed, and in how many of the hearts and homes of England would not the perfect light of the sun of happiness have set for ever, before the armada, which was leaving her shores, should return again in peace!

Before that month of March had come, however, Lorna had one week of almost too

great happiness granted to her, and yet she often thought afterwards that if it had not been for the remembrance of that week, she could not have borne up during the cruel trial of the next two years, which was sometimes of agonizing anxiety, and always of hope deferred. Two years, as it was, had already sped away since their engagement, and never since their first farewell had they ever met ; but how many would have to pass before they would see one another again she hardly dared to ask herself.

In order that O'Connor might spend all his very short leave in South Devon—and he had only a brief ten days—Reginald had offered his father and mother the hospitalities of Burrscombe, which they had accepted. Winny and Gerty were also staying with their aunt, and although not a merry, they were far from being an altogether unhappy party, for Charles O'Connor managed to keep up, or to assume wonderful spirits under the circumstances.

Reginald, with a letter from Lorna in his pocket, met him on the pier at Dover ; and as O'Connor was, as may be supposed, all anxiety to reach South Devon, immediately they arrived in London they drove to the Great Western Hotel, paying a solitary visit to the tailor on the way ; and after a comfortable dinner, Reginald despatched him by the night mail, having offered to stay behind for another day and execute his commissions.

It was more than five years since they had last shaken hands, and almost nine since they had first met in the little room on the ground floor of the fifth division at Woolhurst, and, as may be supposed, there was plenty of staple for conversation during the journey and the two hours they sat together in the coffee room of the hotel.

“ You are the oldest friend I possess,” O'Connor observed, as they were discussing a bottle of sparkling Moselle shortly before his departure. “ I never made a real friend until I met you, and you have been a friend

in need more than once. I am so glad we have had this chat over old times, as most likely we should not have had another opportunity."

"Edric Maitland and his sister are my oldest friends," Reginald answered; "but you come next on the list. It seems hardly possible that it can be more than eight years and a half since our friendship began; but I have known *votre ami de cœur* and her brother nearly double the time. I think you will find her looking pretty well under the circumstances. It is wonderful how she has brightened up since she first knew that you were coming home."

"Ah," rejoined his friend, "it is all very well for the gentlemen of the Press, who sit at home at ease, to write away in the strain of this article," touching as he spoke a paper on the table; "but it is a very different matter when, you see, as I do, my long anticipated happiness postponed until God alone knows when, coming home to say what I know may

be my last farewell. It makes martial glory, and all this wordy oratory, look of a very different colour. I think I am as brave as most men; and though I am looking forward for many reasons to active service, I am sometimes almost coward enough to wish that peace had continued a few years longer. I am not thinking so much of myself—I suppose I shall not have over much time for thinking—as of my poor little Lorna, I dread the trial it will be to her, always in fear of what the latest intelligence may be.”

“I don’t think you know Lorna quite as well as I do in some respects,” Reginald answered, “although, I daresay, you will understand better what I mean before the next ten days are over. She will be able to bear the trial, hard though it will be, better than most—she knows the secret of faith and endurance.”

“I understand you,” he replied; “and I must get her to teach me the secret before I leave. I often think that if I should be spared

to come home again, she is just the girl that a thoughtless, light-hearted fellow like me ought to marry, who will do her best to keep me up to the mark,"—and he sighed as he thought of the happiness which was to have been his that very year.

"Cheer up, old fellow," responded his friend ; " I had particular orders from Gerty Sinclair to keep up your spirits, so I must not let you begin to take a gloomy view of things. We must all try and look at the bright side of the matter, and hope that the campaign may soon be over, and that before very long we may meet again at Sandstone, under happier auspices, to celebrate the great event."

" But they say every bullet has its billet, and I suppose that my carcass will serve the purpose as well as Dick's or Harry's, and I do not think a man is likely to be less brave, who can look the fact quietly in the face. But you need not fear but that when I am in Devonshire, I shall be old Charlie over again—so, ' hence, loathed melancholy,'"—

and, pouring out a glass of wine, he nodded to his friend, saying, " your health, A'Bear, and I'll give you a toast which shall include your wish—' The single married, and the married happy.' "

" With all my heart," he answered, " and a very pretty toast it is; but it is time for you to be off, as the mail starts in about ten minutes."

The ten days went " swifter than a weaver's shuttle," but, unlike Job's when he uttered those words, they were not " without hope." Lorna did her best to teach O'Connor *the secret*, and in a measure succeeded in transferring to him a portion of her faith and reliance. He was to leave on the Monday, and it was on the previous Saturday evening that as they were seated together in the dining room before the fire, he produced a little case from his pocket, and taking out of it a sapphire ring, said, as he took hold of her hand, on the fourth finger of which was a diamond ring, the gift of her aunt—

"Some one told me that the sapphire meant 'truth, constancy, and love,' and I want to make an exchange with you. I know there is no fear of our forgetting one another, but still I should like you to have something to remind you constantly of me."

While he made the exchange, she kissed him, and said—

"I shall never take it off until I see you again, not for a single minute," and she repeated over to herself several times, 'truth, constancy, love.' "

"And what does the diamond mean, I wonder?" he remarked, looking at the ring on his little finger, in which was set one magnificent diamond of remarkable brilliancy.

"I am sure, I don't know," she replied. Aunt Ellen gave it to me the day you sailed from Plymouth, and made me say the Chinese proverb, used by the maidens to their sailor lovers, 'Good sky, good water, and a fair wind to blow you back again,' and as you have come back safely once, I hope we may

meet again before very, very long. It was given to her husband by an Indian Rajah, who said that it was a talisman of remarkable properties, and would keep its wearer from harm, and I hope it may prove so, and bring my own Charlie back to me once more."

"And a talisman it shall be; I feel the better for it already. It will always remind me that there is some one at home who is thinking and praying about me."

"Charlie," she said, nestling closer to him, as they sat hand in hand together, "you must not think me a very silly little woman, but I dreamt about you last night, and somehow or other I feel that you will come back to me."

"Silly!" he exclaimed, "why you have more sense in your little finger than Charlie has in his whole body; but tell me the dream, darling?"

"It was not very much of a dream," she replied, "but I thought that we were

living in a beautiful cottage by the sea. I don't think that I have ever seen a cottage exactly like it, but it all seemed quite real, and we were so happy together."

He did not answer, but the notion that he would return again in safety took possession of his mind, and in the midst of the greatest hardships and dangers, the cottage scene oftentimes recurred to him; and who can say but that the hope which it inspired may not have helped to keep him in health and vigour, when all around him men were sickening and dying like flies at the end of autumn?

He remained so long silent, gazing thoughtfully into the fire, that she resolved to take the opportunity of proffering the request which she had determined to make to him that very evening—

"Charlie," she began a little timidly, "I want you to do something."

"What is it, darling?" he asked, looking up.

"Why, to-morrow is Sacrament Sunday, and I should so much like you to receive it with us all."

"A'Bear spoke to me about it the other day," he slowly answered, "but I can't quite make up my mind; you see I have never received it before, and I look upon it as a somewhat serious step."

"But, Charlie dear," she urged, "don't you think that if you are fit to go into battle, you must be fit to come to the Lord's table?"

"You women have such a queer way of putting things," he replied; "I had intended to talk the matter over with A'Bear to-night; and, though I will not promise, I think it is very likely you will see me by your side to-morrow."

Shortly afterwards, Gerty came in to call them to the supper table.

That night, and far into the small hours of the morning, Charles O'Connor and his friend had a long talk upon that and many other kindred subjects, and both were glad of the

opportunity. As they were about to retire, Reginald rose from his seat, observing—

“I hope you will not think I am going to make a curious end to this conversation,” and walking to an old oak cupboard, took from it a neat little case, containing a pair of revolvers, which he placed in his friend’s hands with the remark, “you know what is inside by the look of it; it is the most practical present I could think of under the circumstances, the gun-maker assured me it is the very latest thing out. I did not give it you before, because I thought if Lorna knew about it, it would only bring all the horrors of war before her mind unnecessarily.”

“Really, A’Bear, it is indeed a most kind and thoughtful present, and I accept it with many thanks; and who knows,” he said, as he opened the case and handled the toy-looking but deadly weapons within, “but that one of these little gentlemen may some day be the means of saving my life.”

“In order that such may be the case, I

want you to promise always to carry one of them at least about with you, or else you may have left it behind at the very time when you most need it."

"Very well," he answered, "I will make the promise, and Lorna's ring shall always remind me of it."

On the following day, the young soldier and his betrothed were kneeling side by side at the Lord's table, receiving strength for the separation of the morrow. The next time he received it was at Varna, in the month of August, shortly before the expedition sailed for the Crimea, and with him were some few, few in comparison to the vast host around, thus getting ready for the battle. The diamond, which was of the purest water, seemed to have the power of absorbing the rays of light during the day, and giving them out again in the darkness, and that night it seemed to glisten more than usual, and he felt not for the first time its talismanic influence on his mind and memory, and in-

directly on his health and spirits. On board that mighty fleet, as it sailed towards the Crimean Chersonese, there was no one in higher spirits or better health than Charles O'Connor. In the next transport to that in which his battery was embarked were stowed away the men and horses of the light cavalry regiment in which dashing Gerard Lisle was cornet, who at A'Bear's request had sought out the young Artillery lieutenant and made him a friend to their mutual advantage.

As it happened, they reached at the same moment the narrow strip of shingle, which reminded O'Connor very much of the Slapton sands near Dartmouth, with the sea on one side and the lake on the other, upon which the infantry had landed on the previous day; and Gerard Lisle, as he stood upon the shore, saw what had very nearly proved the end of his friend's share of the expedition, and of his life at the same time.

O'Connor, having a young horse, rejoicing

in the name of Bob, as good as he looked and as hard as nails, would not trust him to any one but himself, and was standing on one of the rafts holding his head, having fortunately stowed away his kit in one of the row boats that had preceded them to the shore in charge of his servant; when, as they neared the strand, and just as he was about to lead him down the inclined plane of planks, half-resting on the beach, half-floating on the breakers, a larger billow than usual came thundering on the beach. No skill could prevent the catastrophe—the hapless float was driven against the shore, and in less time than it has taken to describe the accident, it had tilted over, and in a moment O'Connor and his charger were buried in the surf. But many a time as a boy had he swam amid such a surf off the shores of his Galway home, so dropping the reins, and calling to his horse, he struck out for the land, and was soon being dragged on shore by a stalwart Jack Tar, one of the many who had rushed to his assistance,

and who patted him on the back saying "Well done, sojer," while another batch were doing a like office at a little distance to the faithful horse, who had heard his master's call, and followed his lead.

"Well done, O'Connor," said Gerard Lisle, coming up, and adding his congratulations to those of the group surrounding him; "I thought for the moment it was all over with you, you evidently havn't spent all your time learning the dead languages. I don't think you need have any fear of a Russian bullet after this; I only wish some one had given me a ring."

"All right, old fellow, but if you have a drop of the cratur about you I should not mind having a taste."

Immediately a dozen flasks were handed to him, and taking Lisle's, he drank about a glass of it neat, declaring that—

"Salt water never did or could do any one any harm, and he should be none the worse for his ducking." It was by no means the

first time by a long way that he had been in a somewhat similar predicament when out-duck-shooting in Ireland, and had never yet experienced any ill-effects from it, and why should he now? "If only," he thought afterwards, "one of those confounded special correspondents doesn't send a true and particular account to the papers, and frighten them all at home unnecessarily." Fortunately the order was sent immediately afterwards to land tents, so that he was enabled to make himself tolerably comfortable for the night.

As he was about to mount the saddle next morning, he patted Bob's arched and glossy neck, and putting part of a biscuit into his mouth, said—

"We were not born to be drowned, old boy, that's certain, and as long as your master has a biscuit you shall have half; and when we are living in the little cottage by the sea, you'll carry him over the dikes of old Ireland again, won't you, my beauty?" And, Bob, pawing the ground in his anxiety

to be off, as his master vaulted into the saddle snorted his reply, and was soon moving eastward in direction of Sebastopol. They took part in the battle of the Alma, in the forced march to Balaclava, during which he managed to buy from a soldier in his friend Lisle's regiment part of the spoil of the retreating Russians surprised upon the march, a rich winter cloak lined with valuable fur, and which proved very useful during the following winter. That night, wrapped in his new cloak, he laid down to rest on the heights of Balaclava, and slept as soundly as any child upon a bed of down.

It was not until many months afterwards that Lorna knew how near she had been losing her lover at the commencement of the campaign, a campaign which hardly any, from the private to the general, as yet realized the magnitude.

CHAPTER XIII.

It was on the night of September 26th that the allied armies sat down before Sebastopol, and there they remained day after day in a state of comparative inaction as far as positive fighting was concerned, digging trenches and dragging up heavy guns; but throwing away the golden opportunity of taking the town by a *coup de main*, enabling their enemies by mighty efforts to re-fortify their stronghold, to collect a fresh and undemoralized army, while their own was daily diminishing in numbers and physique. Such was the state of affairs that just about a month afterwards the besiegers had also become the besieged.

It was the dawn of the 25th of October,

1854, and Gerard Lisle had risen early with the men of his regiment, an hour before day-break; and found time, while breakfast was preparing, of which he never partook, to take out his youngest sister's keepsake, which he had promised always to look at the first thing in the morning. It was a little book containing a text for every day in the year. He opened it, and with some difficulty, owing to the gloominess of the morning, managed to make out the text for the day—"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thòu art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." It was a part of his little sister Clara's favourite Psalm, and he remembered hearing her repeat it but little more than a year before, and tried to say it himself not very successfully.

Almost immediately afterwards the report came that two flags were flying on Canrobert's Hill, the signal that the enemy was approaching. It was the morning of the battle of

Balaclava. In a few moments every man of the light brigade, which was moving towards the southern slopes of the Causeway heights, was in the saddle. And there, impatiently awaiting an order to move forwards, they remained, while the Russians were allowed to drive the Turks from the redoubts on Canrobert's Hill, and to obtain again the command of the Woronzoff Road; although stopped from advancing further by the "thin red streak tipped with steel," of Sir Colin Campbell and his 93rd Highlanders. And if the chargers pawed the ground, and their masters chafed at what seemed to them at the time culpable inaction, what were their feelings of impatience, somewhat later in the day, while witnessing the gallant charge of Scarlett's three hundred upon the dense masses of Russian horse, willing but not allowed to assist in the battle which was so fiercely raging within a quarter of a mile of where they were standing. Not the least impatient was Gerard Lisle—who was standing by his

horse, a bright and gallant bay, a present from an old brother officer of his father, which he had just re-named "Tchernaya"—ready to vault at a moment's notice into the saddle, and wishing, cornet though he was, that he could have had the command of the light brigade for a moment, to have launched them upon the broken and retreating Cossacks.

He watched during that long and pregnant ten minutes the successive charges of the Greys, Inniskillings, the Royals, and the 4th Dragoons, their ingulfment in the dark-coated masses of the Russian horse, and then the gradual disorder and retreat of the enemy, and almost forgot, as many another—for the distance was sufficient to hide the more cruel aspects of the struggle—that it was a fierce conflict for life. The position of his brigade reminded him most of the old foot-ball days at Malborough, when, as he was a swift runner, he had been placed upon one of the flanks, ready, as soon as the oppor

tunity should offer, to seize upon the ball and make a rush for the goal. He now again saw just such another opportunity as many a time in his boyish days he had seized upon with a rush, and wondered at his chief's inactivity. Among those standing on the hill-top, amid a crowd of officers and men, was his friend Charles O'Connor, watching eagerly the issue of the tournament below, and a mighty cheer burst from every lip as they saw the utter rout of the Muscovite cavaliers, put to flight by their brave compatriots. About an hour afterwards he witnessed another scene, a fearful spectacle, a cruel, useless tragedy.

Almost immediately after the gallant charge of the heavy dragoons, an order was carried to the commander of the cavalry brigades to advance and take advantage of any opportunity to recover the heights; then followed the fifty minutes of inactivity, and lastly the order from the Commander-in-Chief, with its mistaken import; followed almost immediately by the quiet command of the general of the

light brigade—"The brigade will advance!" And steadily, and without hesitation, it rode up the valley to an inevitable fate; artillery and infantry on either flank, and straight in their very front a battery of twelve guns belching forth a hurricane of shot and shell! They hesitated, however, not for a moment, although in this instance, obedience and sacrifice were synonymous.

As Gerard Lisle rode amidst those withering volleys, the last words which he had read came into his mind; it seemed, indeed, like the dark valley of the shadow of death. He saw poor Nolan fall, and heard his unearthly and appalling shriek as his horse turned and instinctively tried to avoid his master's fate. Every moment he expected a similar fate himself, for the flood of smoke and flame, the whirling of the deadly shot, the whiz of the bullet, the crash of the cruel shell, the cries of the wounded, the fall of the dying, were the sights which met his eyes, and the sounds which fell upon his ears. Many were slain

around him on every side ; but for a time he seemed to bear a charmed life ; at length, almost one of the first, he reached the guns, and side by side with his servant—a young man from the same village, who stuck close to his master's side—he drave into the wreathing smoke, and darted between the murderous cannon, and then, after pistolling some of the Russian gunners with his revolver, joining the handful of men still remaining to his regiment, he charged the mass of horse drawn up to bar their further progress. What could even such desperate valour avail against such overpowering numbers ? They were at length driven back, still fighting—a handful of men against an army !

History tells us how the fragment of those gallant squadrons, after cutting their way through two lines of cavalry, halted in order to oppose their further retreat, at length reached the spot from whence they had started on that gallant though unavailing charge ; but alas ! among that scanty band

was not Gerard Lisle. He had passed through the thick of the fight unscathed, and when "nearly home again," as his faithful servant expressed it, a bullet crashed through his back—almost the last fired at the retreating cavalry; he had managed to keep on his horse for a few more yards, and had then gradually slipped from the saddle, and was now lying in the brave young soldier's arms, who was shaking his fist in impotent grief and anger at the Muscovite army on the hill, surrounded by the few remaining men of his squadron, by all of whom he was much beloved. He was evidently dying.

The surgeon who had examined him had said that it was useless to carry him from the field, it would only cause him additional pain; and now his young life was nearing its close, uselessly but gloriously sacrificed. Amid the paroxysms of pain he was giving directions to his servant, Richard Ashfield, the playmate of his boyhood, who had been the chief pupil of the Sunday school of which Mrs. Lisle was the

superintendent, but who had been also seized with martial ardour, and had joined his young master's regiment.

"Dick," he said, faintly, and the lad bent his head lower; "Dick, you will tell my mother that I died happy—I did my duty to the end."

"Yes, Master Gerard," he answered.

"Perhaps it would have been better if I had followed her advice; but it's too late now; but if you should ever get home you'll tell master Arthur—I should wish him to be a clergyman."

"Yes, Master Gerard."

After a moment he said again, in an almost inaudible voice, for quickly was the life-blood flowing from his stricken body—

"I have written a letter to my mother, but I have told you about it before—as soon as I am gone, you will send it?"

With faltering accents he reiterated his previous promise in the same words. Then followed another cruel paroxysm of agony,

and when it was over, he lay quiet again. His lips moved, the young man bent his head still lower—

“Tell little Clara I always read her book, they were the last words I ever read—this morning.” And he said them over to himself—“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.”

Richard Ashfield just managed to catch the words “valley”—“shadow”—and the beautiful 23rd Psalm, a reminiscence of his Sunday school days, which, when he was almost an infant had been taught him line upon line, and precept upon precept, by one of Gerard Lisle’s sisters, flashed across his memory.

“Master Gerard!” he whispered to his master, who was now lying on a Hussar-jacket spread upon the green turf, with his head in his faithful servant’s lap, “Master Gerard! I think I remember the whole Psalm; would you like me to say it?” He raised his hand in token of assent, and the young private of

Hussars, forgetful of his rough comrades standing around, put his hands together, as he had been accustomed when a boy at school not so very long before, and reverently repeated the well-remembered words.

When he had finished, his young master opened his eyes, and gazing upon him with the deepest gratitude, looked the thanks he could not speak; and it was with the lingering murmur of those words, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever" upon his ears, that the flickering flame of that gallant young life was extinguished—another victim offered at the altar of ambition. Little did Gerard Lisle's sister think, as she was casting her bread upon the waters, laboriously teaching the inattentive and rebellious urchin the words of life, that she should thus find them again after many days.

From the hill-top O'Connor had witnessed the disastrous issue of the rash and ill-judged charge, and, as soon as he could conveniently, hastened down to the foot of the hill, anxious

to know his friend's fate, hoping for the best but fearful of the worst. From a brother officer of poor Gerard's, one of the few who had escaped without a wound, he found that his worst anticipations were realized, and he hurried onward, but arrived too late ; and as he knelt by his side, and took the now cold hand in his, from below his breath there hissed out the words "Murdered, Gerard Lisle ; some one has much to answer for to-day." But murdered though he was, uselessly sacrificed to error or incapability, England's heart will beat with emotion whenever that deed of daring shall be mentioned.

That same evening he was buried, not like many another in a shallow trench, but in a deep grave dug by the hands of his faithful servant, and Charles O'Connor performed the last offices over the gallant dead. He had brought a pair of scizzors with him, and just before commencing the service he stooped down and cut a lock of hair from off the now placid brow. Richard Ashfield understood

the meaning of the act, and touching his hat, said—

“I think Miss Clara would like a lock, too, sir.” O’Connor immediately stooped down and cut a second, and then a third, which he gave to the young Hussar.

On the following day, Richard Ashfield presented himself at the tent door of his master’s friend. O’Connor asked him to enter, and he at once put into his hands a small parcel containing Gerard Lisle’s watch, to which was attached a locket with his mother’s portrait, a letter which he had written to her and given into his servant’s charge, in case at any time he should meet with a sudden end, and a few other small articles, saying that there “was going to be a sale of his late master’s effects, and requesting O’Connor to forward the parcel to England.” O’Connor at once promised, and that very afternoon wrote a letter to Mrs. Lisle, with a full description of the sad occurrence, which he there and then received from the young man’s lips.

As he was about to leave again, he touched his cap and said—"I don't think Miss Clara would mind my having this little book; you see he used to read out of it every morning, and I seem as how I should like to keep it in memory of Master Gerard."

"That I am sure she would not," he answered, as he put the little keepsake into his hand.

About a fortnight afterwards the news reached England, and the widowed mother bowed her head beneath the blow, for Gerard was her eldest son, the pride of all her little flock. She made no complaint, too well had she already been disciplined in the school of adversity; but her hair seemed to grow more grey from that very day, not with the snows of age, but with the wintry frost of sorrow. A few days later there arrived O'Connor's letter, and the packet. It brought her much consolation, and as she read the letter to little Clara seated on her lap, they mingled their tears together. The watch and chain were given to Arthur when he returned from Malborough

at Christmas ; and when he knew of his brother's wish, he at once promised his mother to be a clergyman, and never swerved for a moment from his promise, or desired to. The mother and sisters divided the locks of hair between them ; and Clara, in the midst of her first great sorrow, for she had been too young when her father died to be affected by it, was glad to think that her gift had been a blessing to her brother, and the 23rd Psalm was dearer to her than ever.

In the early part of the next year there arrived a bulky package for the young Hussar ; which, when opened, was found to contain a letter from Mrs. Lisle, another from little Clara, an abundant supply of warm clothing, and many other things which cheered his heart and body, when acting during the rest of that long and dreary winter as a lonely vidette upon the slopes of the Chersonese. It was a present from Mrs. Lisle and her daughters, a token of gratitude for benefits which they felt could never be repaid to Richard Ashfield, the faithful servant of poor Gerard Lisle.

CHAPTER XIV.

WHEN Lorna Maitland read the name of O'Connor's friend in the paper among the long list of the killed and wounded, she trembled, and her heart so sunk within her that she hardly dare to glance down the rest of the column—the destroying angel seemed to becoming very, very, near. Had she known the danger her Charlie had been in a day or two before, how nearly his name had been upon a similar but longer list, she would have trembled more; for on the 5th of November the Russians, blessed by their priests, assured of the assistance of the God of battles, and roused to a pitch of unnatural frenzy by the combined stimulants of fanati-

cism and alcohol, had made their fiercest and most determined effort to raise the siege, and drive the hated enemies of their Czar and country into the sea from whence they had so lately come.

It was just about five o'clock of what appeared likely to be a dirty, drizzly, gloomy day, very similar to that which we often have in England at the same period of the year, and Charles O'Connor and many another, too many for the last time, had risen and had just looked out of the door of his tent at the cheerless and comfortless morning, and had watched for a moment the flickering sparks of the feeble fires of brushwood at which the men were endeavouring to cook their breakfasts.

"I should not at all wonder if the Russians were to give us a taste of their quality to-day, this is just one of their mornings," he remarked to Rufford, who was inhabiting the next tent, and was looking out with a very dismal and lack-lustrous expression of countenance.

"D——n it, I hope not," he answered, entering the tent again.

The words were hardly out of his mouth, when the sound of firing from the plateau above the valley of the Tchernaya warned them that the enemy were advancing, and in a short time it was evident that during the previous night immense masses of Russian infantry, and a numerous and powerful artillery, had been brought up against the right flank of the allied army, in the hopes of overwhelming and crushing their sleeping and unsuspecting enemies with the first appearance of the dawn. O'Connor hastily concluded his dressing, snatched a few hurried mouthfuls of food and drink, and was on the point of leaving the tent to hurry to the assistance of the men of his battery who were preparing to limber up and away to the scene of action, when the gleam of the diamond on his finger caught his eye. "Thank you, little monitor," said he, "that gleam may save my life." It had reminded him of the pistols which he had

all but left behind. A thought of the giver for a moment vibrated through his heart, the next sufficed to seize the pistols, and in a few more he was trotting on Bob's back to the scene of the combat now raging fiercely between the scanty British force and an enemy four times as numerous. England expected her sons that day to do their duty, and nobly was it done. Again and again did the Russian general hurl dense masses of her brave and stubborn warriors, urged by a son of their Emperor, against the British position; again and again were they driven back. Sometimes, indeed, like the occasional brief and deceptive flashes of the sun during that day of gloomiest slaughter, victory appeared as if likely to shine upon the soldiers of the Czar, as the thin red lines of the flower of Britain's warriors, swept by a whirlwind of shot and shell, and pressed backward by the very weight and obstinate courage of their assailants, seemed almost to shrink into nothingness. Regiments were broken, nearly annihilated, but the rem-

nant fought on in groups, all but despairingly rallied by their few remaining officers. Their ammunition became expended, and the opposing bands rushed together, anxious to decide the struggle with the bayonet; and then commenced a series of desperate deeds of valour, fierce hand to hand combats between the Briton and the Slav, and the Russian princes thought that the day was theirs—but it was not to be. Each man of that hardly-pressed and valiant band was endued upon that memorable day with the spirit of Leonidas and his three hundred in the pass of Thermopylæ,—it was the courage of free men against a despot's serfs.

The enemy had laid their guns beforehand, and therefore each discharge took effect, while the English batteries for some time, owing to the misty darkness of the gloomy morning, had to fire in a certain degree at random, and yet cautiously for fear of inflicting injuries on their own men.

It was during the time that the battle was

raging most fiercely that a body of Russians approached the battery to which Rufford and O'Connor were attached. Ignorant in the dim and uncertain morning light whether they were friends or foes, the gunners hesitated to fire. That minute of hesitation was their destruction, for immediately, with unearthly yells of hideous fury, their enemies rushed upon them, bayoneted the gunners and spiked the guns.

And where was O'Connor during those disastrous moments ?

He had dismounted in order to assist the men in training one of the guns to fire at the flashes of the Russian cannon which were dealing fearful destruction to their comrades ; and Bob, whom he had trained to follow and obey him, more with the instincts of a dog than a horse, was ready to hand a little to the rear. Just about this time an enormous shell, fired probably from a steamer which had been sent up in the night to the head of the creek at Inkerman, fell close to the rear of their battery

and exploded, dealing fearful destruction around. A fragment of it killed the horse upon which Rufford was riding, severely wounding him also in the leg, and with a fearful oath and cry of pain he fell to the ground.

At this very moment, when the battery had been slightly disorganised by the accident, the Russians appeared, and the unfortunate mistake occurred; for hid by one of the ravines which led up to the crest of the hill, the Russians had managed to reach the edge of the plateau, almost in the centre of the English position, unobserved; too late they were discovered to be enemies. One withering discharge was hurled at the dense mass, but before the cannon could be fired again their yelling antagonists were upon them. There were no supports close at hand, and the men in charge of the ammunition waggons turned and fled, O'Connor having fired the gun nearest to him when the Russians were only a few yards off. Very probably the smoke caused by that discharge may have been the

means of saving his life ; for Bob having looked around in vain for his master, was about to follow the remnant of the battery that was hastening to the rear. Not a moment was to be lost, if it were not already too late ; but just in time the horse heard his master's call, turned back, and as their enemies rushed between the guns and appeared through the mingled wreaths of smoke and mist, with a cheer the brave young man sprang into the saddle. Bob wanted no spur or whip, and amid the bullets which the disappointed Russians discharged at them, they escaped in safety to the rear.

Before they had moved many yards, however, and before Bob had got into his full swing, O'Connor passed Rufford, who had tried to drag himself to the rear, but had sunk exhausted on the turf.

"For God's sake, O'Connor," he shrieked, as he held up his hand imploringly, "help me ; do not leave me to perish."

The Russians were bayonetting the wounded

who were lying on the ground, and in another moment Rufford would not have been in the list of the wounded, but of the killed. O'Connor knew this; but was he to sacrifice his own life in an almost hopeless endeavour to save the life of one who had treated him, too, but a few years before with the most brutal cruelty? No; revenge is sweet—let him perish, blaspheming as he would to the very last. No such thoughts, however, passed through his mind; reckless of the fact that the enemy was only a few yards off, he sprang to the ground, clasped his unfortunate brother officer in his arms and lifted him up, intending to ride with him to the rear. But not so easily were the Muscovites to be baulked of their prey—a party of six who had advanced beyond their comrades seeing what was taking place, with fiendish screams of furious hatred, rushed forward to frustrate his intention. O'Connor might still have escaped, but never yet had he failed a comrade in distress; so, dropping Rufford, who, endued

with a momentary strength—the strength of despair—was standing on his feet, holding on to the saddle for support, he thrust one pistol into his hands, and taking the other in his left hand, and drawing his sword, awaited the onset.

Fortunately for them, their enemies had been so engaged in bayonetting the wounded and the dying, that they had omitted to load again, while the two young men were deadly shots, having often practised with these very pistols during their stay at Varna and Gallipoli; and so it was that five of the grey-coated Russians fell before they had been able to use their bayonets, and the sixth, while engaged in a desperate hand-to-hand contest with O'Connor, sword against bayonet, sprang with an unearthly yell into the air, pierced to the heart by a deadly messenger from Rufford's revolver. A numerous band were rushing forward to avenge their comrade's fall; but they were a few seconds too late, for O'Connor, sheathing his sword and

putting the revolver between his teeth, flung his now fainting brother officer across Bob's back, who had never attempted to move during the combat, and vaulted into the saddle. The faithful animal answered at once to his master's call, and although the reins were hanging loosely about his neck, followed his own natural instincts and intelligence, and gathering himself together for the final effort, galloped bravely with his double load into the comparative safety which had been reached by the rest of the battery, while his master discharged the remaining barrels of his revolver into the advancing phalanx of the Muscovites.

Once O'Connor, after witnessing Rufford's brutality to his friend in their room in the fourth division at Woolhurst, had seized the poker, and brandishing it with impotent anger in the direction of the retreating footsteps of the brutal and depraved bully, had vowed vengeance, which many a time afterwards he reiterated during the following weeks, while

sharing with Benson and A'Bear the godless manifestations of Rufford's spite and hatred. More than eight years had passed by since that vow had been registered in the book of remembrance, and thus had he put in force the *lex talionis*!

Many scenes similar to that in which O'Connor had taken part occurred that day, and amid them his conspicuous bravery was unnoticed. When he lifted Rufford from the saddle, and gave him into the charge of a litter-bearer, the poor fellow had fallen into a dead faint, and as O'Connor stood for a moment with Bob's bridle round his arm, his head also swam round—the effect of the excitement and tremendous exertion which he had just been through. A few moments sufficed in his case to make him himself again, and after a drink from a flask of brandy which he had in his pocket, he reloaded his remaining pistol—the other had been dropped by Rufford—and kissing the ring which had indeed proved a talisman that day, he sprang

once more into the saddle, and rode to where the remaining officers of the battery were assembled grieving over the loss of their guns.

But their capture was only for a short time, for whilst they were talking together, above the fearful din of battle, somewhere between nine and ten in the morning, there sounded the inspiring strains of the trumpets of our brave allies, and by them there rushed the battalions of the French Chasseurs, advancing eagerly to the fray. Our struggling warriors heard the trumpets, and as their welcome allies fell upon the flank, they once again made an impetuous charge, and the enemy broke and fled, and the captured guns were soon once more in the hands of O'Connor and his brother artillerymen. They had only been spiked with wood, and were quickly in a condition to be fired again. At eleven, the day cleared up for a time, and they were enabled to make some amends for their unfortunate mistake which had nearly lost

the battle of Inkermann, and to revenge themselves upon the dense masses of their grey-coated enemies. At twelve o'clock the battle was won, although the soldiers of the Czar made one more desperate though unavailing effort to change the fortunes of the day.

That afternoon, before O'Connor took any refreshment himself, sorely needed though it was, he assisted his servant, who had also survived the day, in feeding and rubbing down his well-tried steed, for to his courage and docility he felt that he in a great measure owed his life; and then he sought his tent, which, surrounded by the *débris* of many another, was fortunately standing, and kneeling down, thanked the Almighty for having preserved him amid the countless dangers of that bloody day.

On the following morning, with the captain of the battery, he rode to the scene of the previous day's contest, and they carefully examined the position which they had assisted to defend. The mist had vanished, and the

fearful nature of the conflict was revealed to them. Here a bloody circle of the dead showed where a shell had exploded; here a line of corpses marked the passage of the destroying bolt; there a spot pointed to a fierce and desperate struggle, where victory had wavered in the balance—where Briton, Slav, and Gaul were scattered in confusion dire on every side; where an acre reaped by the hand of the Destroying Angel, as a wheat-field with its sheaves in autumn, was thickly strewn, every yard of it, with the grey coats of the Russian, the bright blue of the French Chasseurs, and the scarlet of our own brave infantry, each covering a silent corpse. Some were lying alone, having fallen where the leaden messenger of death had pierced them through the heart—these looked happy; others, where the opposing hosts had met in fearful combat, bayonet against bayonet, were piled together as though shocked by the reapers in readiness for the harvest car of Hades. Of these, some wore looks of fierce

anger, godless wrath, unrighteous fury upon their countenances, which, in many—oh! strange usurpation of Faith's office!—seemed to have made them forget that they were dying; while side by side with them were others, who, in their expiring throes of agony had lifted their black-stained hands to Heaven, in which position they still remained, stiffened, frozen by the blast of death, crying to God for pardon for themselves, and—though dead, yet speaking—calling to God for vengeance on the insensate cruelty of man's ambition, which could demand so cruel a sacrifice. Amid these masses of the dead were the wounded Russians, for there had been no time yet to remove them; some of them were eloquently appealing by dumb motions to the compassion of the passer-by as they pointed to their maimed and gory limbs; others were groaning—crying out in a strong but unmistakable language for water and assistance; while others again spake neither by word nor sign, but from beneath their knitted brows

glared with untamed fury, and impotent, though undying hatred, upon the foes who had escaped their vengeance, and into whose hands they had fallen.

Here, was a long line of litter-bearers French and English, carrying comrades in whom some signs of life had been discovered; there, were others bearing their burdens to the hill-side, where thirty or forty at a time they were packed together—"heaped and pent—rider and horse—friend, foe—in one red burial blent!" The mist had served during the previous evening and night as a winding sheet for the dead, and now it had vanished, or had turned into the dewdrop, in which, from every tiny blade of grass, nature, more kind than man, was weeping over the tragic, but too human scene around.

Such were some of the sights which met the eyes of O'Connor and the captain of his battery, as they visited the fearful scene of carnage. Close around where their battery had been captured and retaken again, the

most sanguinary struggle would seem to have occurred, and the most desperate charges and countercharges to have taken place. It seemed wonderful that any could have escaped at all where so many had fallen, for the heaped up piles of dead were something awful to behold; while the despairing cries of the wounded whom they were unable to succour, were sounds which rung in their ears for many an hour afterwards. As they rode back again, it was with strange, and not altogether pleasurable feelings that O'Connor recognized a group of stiffened corpses, most of whom had been slain by his own hand, though in self-defence, and while acting the part of the good Samaritan—a strange mingling of good and evil, he thought. But it was of no use to indulge in morbid fancies, and a brisk trot back in the keen air helped to dissipate them.

The next day he determined to visit Rufford, and set out in the early part of the afternoon on a voyage of discovery through the hospitals, full to overflowing

with the wounded, the dying and the dead. At length he discovered him, but in such a condition as showed that his own gallant conduct of the previous day had been unavailing. The wound itself had not been so very dangerous; but whether owing to the excitement of the rescue acting on a weakened body, or to some other cause, mental or otherwise—perhaps the fear, caused by the evil life he had led, of that death which had approached so near—he was delirious.

Poor fellow! His life had not been such as to enable him to look with the fortitude of faith upon a long and painful illness, with the probability of its terminating in a slow and lingering death. “Heaven lies about us in our infancy,” saith one of our poets; but it had not been so with Rufford, except during his very early years, when seated upon the knees of the faithful old house-keeper—all honour be unto her!—he had learnt some simple prayers and hymns, Who can

tell—it is one of those unfathomable mysteries, which, try how they may, no man can solve—what might have been the tenor of his after history, if, upon the foundation laid by the good old woman, goodly stones hewn from a similar quarry had been placed in order? but, alas, very different had been the nature of the superstructure. Well might he have exclaimed in the words of another poet, who knew too well the meaning of the lines he wrote—

“ And thus untaught in youth my heart to tame,
My springs of life were poisoned.”

His mother, married to a weak and careless husband, the motto of whose existence was, “let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die,” was a heartless, worldly, selfish woman, who looked upon her children as so many unwelcome encumbrances. During the early part of their lives, they were kept in a state of perpetual banishment from the parental presence; left to the tender mercies of the servants, who were kinder far than

she whose blood flowed in their veins. Worse off than orphans—for the orphan has oftentimes many parents raised up to take the place of the two which it has lost—they were the children of that worst fiend in human guise, more brutal far than any beast of the field—a mother, forgetful of her sucking child, unmindful of the responsibilities of her motherhood. And when permitted to take their place in the family circle, it was in a home, if such it could be called, where religion was never mentioned, being apparently considered a matter unworthy even of the occupation of the leisure hours; where religious people were barely tolerated, and considered at all times fitting objects for mocking ridicule; where the father rarely went to church, and the mother not much more frequently, seldom except to accompany some visitor who might be staying in the house.

In such an atmosphere only one sort of plant could be raised. The lessons of the

aged housekeeper were quickly forgotten, or buried in some neglected corner of the mind ; and he grew up like those who had begotten him—heartless, vicious, cruel and self-willed. The Woolhurst life of his day, with its unbounded field for cruelty and brutality within its academic walls, and for vicious indulgence without, was a soil admirably suited to expand such evil tendencies ; and so, the ill tree had grown apace, misshapen and ill-bent. And now, the tree was about to be cut down, to fall on the side to which it had always leant. Men lean during their whole lives to the left, and nevertheless expect at last to fall with the righteous to the right ; but as a tree is bent, so will it be inclined, as it is inclined so it will fall ; and as it falls so it must lie—and the tree was tottering to its base !

O'Connor, as he knelt by the side of the sufferer that afternoon, and bathed his brow, and tried as far as human power, human sympathy, and human remedies were availing

in such a case, to assuage his sufferings ; felt the power of that Divine axiom "vengeance is Mine, I will repay ;" and the answer of a good conscience amid the fearful scenes before him, around him, and on every side, was like the gleam of the diamond in the darkness.

His own name was often upon the lips of the dying man, as he implored him in piteous accents to "save him, and not leave him to perish ;" and then would follow strings of fearful oaths and blasphemy, strangely mingled with fragments of prayers and hymns, a reminiscence of the teaching of the good old housekeeper, which during the previous day he had been vainly attempting to recall. After a time, however, he lay more still, and seemed to fall asleep, and O'Connor busied himself in attending to the wants of those around him. At last the hour arrived when it was necessary for him to leave the scene of anguish, and suffering ; but when he came to have a farewell look at

his brother officer, to his astonishment he found him sensible and awake, and conscious that he was dying.

O'Connor, knowing that he must leave in a few minutes, tried, and never felt before so fully his own ignorance, to lead him to think of that eternal world to which he was hastening so rapidly; but Rufford was unable or unwilling to listen. In his pocket, however, was a Bible which Lorna had given him during his last visit to South Devon, with many passages marked in order to draw his attention to them; and thinking that God's word might avail where his own words had failed, he opened it and read one of the passages which was marked. But it seemed to have the effect of oil, not thrown upon the waters, but cast into the fire; for the dying man, with all the energy he could assume exclaimed—

“I tell you it is too late! D—n you! leave me alone—I have torments enough without that!”

"Oh, do not think so," pleaded his brother officer. "When I was sitting by your side just now, you were saying many bits of prayers and hymns."

"Was I?" he replied in a more gentle voice. "I could not remember them yesterday. She was the only friend that I ever had, the only one who ever tried to teach me any good;" and he laid still and quiet.

O'Connor remembered two lines which he had heard him say during the afternoon, and he quoted them—"There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Emanuel's veins," and the dying brother officer took up the burden and finished the verse. It seemed to unlock the treasures long buried in his memory, and again he muttered scraps of hymns and fragments of prayers.

At length the last moment that O'Connor could spare had arrived, and he bent down to take his leave. When he was about to move away, Rufford whispered in a faint voice—

“ There is Nettle, I should like her to have a good master.”

His brother officer at once offered to take charge of her ; the dying man thanked him ; and as O'Connor walked towards his tent, he thought how strange, that at such a time a man should have no thought of his mother, his father, or his home—hardly any care even of his own soul—but should be so tenderly solicitous about the welfare of his dog ! Before the next day had come, Rufford was a corpse. Shortly after O'Connor had left him, he had become delirious again, and in his struggles the bandages had become loosened, and he had bled to death.

On the evening of a day somewhat late in November, Mrs. Rufford and her eldest daughter Lydia, seated in the drawing room of a house on the sunny side of Westbourne Terrace, were about to retire in order to dress for a grand ball, to be given that evening by a rich city stockbroker, to which they had received an invitation, when

the man servant brought in an evening paper which, since the landing in the Crimea, her husband had taken in. He handed it to his mistress, who could not help being surprised into a show of feeling, when she saw her own son's name among the long list of wounded.

"Does it say dangerously?" asked her daughter in a cold and calculating voice, emphasizing the last word.

"No; it only mentions the name, without any particulars," her mother answered.

"Oh, then, I don't suppose it is very serious, and he will soon be well again," the sister rejoined.

"It certainly is most unfortunate," observed Mrs. Rufford, with a tone of annoyance in her voice, "this of all nights in the year! It is all owing to your father's absurd notion of taking in this evening paper!"

Now Lydia Rufford had thought one of the stockbroker's sons had been paying her some attentions, which might possibly expand into

a proposal, and she certainly was not going to be baulked of her evening's amusement if she could help it; so she at once argued, selfishly, and heartlessly indifferent as to what might be her brother's condition at the time—

“ Really, mamma, I don't see any reason why we should not go out this evening. It is a fortnight ago since it happened, and he is most likely walking about as well as ever by this time! ”

“ But if your father should come in and see the news in the paper, he will be sure to object to our going. It is not often that he cares about having his own way, but this is just one of the things that he is certain to be obstinate about.”

“ Oh, that is soon settled,” said the dutiful daughter and affectionate sister, who had been only too well trained by her mother in the school of selfishness and deceit, as her father's footstep sounded in the hall; and seizing the paper, she pretended to air it

before the fire, and managed that it should catch fire just as her father entered the room.

"Really, Lydia, I think you might be a little more careful," he exclaimed, as he helped her to extinguish the flame, "you will be setting the house on fire next; and I wanted particularly to see the latest news of the battle of Inkermann. Whatever could you have been doing with the paper so near the fire?"

"I am very sorry," she replied, "it was very wet, and I was drying it; but you will easily be able to get another from one of the news-boys before the evening is over."

Shortly afterwards the footman announced that dinner was ready; and whilst the father proceeded to his sumptuous, though solitary, meal, the mother and daughter went to prepare for the festivities of the evening, knowing that Mr. Rufford would not think of the paper again until dinner was over, which was never less than an hour's operation, by which time they would be on their way to Hyde Park Gardens.

None who heard that night the noisy tones of Lydia Rufford's voice, or marked the complaisant satisfaction depicted on her mother's face, as she watched the obvious attentions paid by the son of their host to her daughter, who was a stylish looking girl of a somewhat coarse type of beauty, would have supposed that the one knew that a brother, and the other that a son, was lying wounded in a Crimean hospital; dead and buried, perchance, for anything they knew to the contrary.

When some few days afterwards the news of his death was in the papers, Mrs. Rufford tired her hair, and painted her face, and, after a few days of retirement—while the outward trappings of a bereaved mother's grief were preparing—in a becoming suit of mourning was at home in her drawing room to receive the condolence of her numerous acquaintances.

About the same time as Mrs. Rufford heard of the news of her son's death, Reginald and Lorna received the particulars of the event from O'Connor, who said that he did

not know to what he chiefly owed the preservation of his life—whether to Lorna's ring, which reminded him of the pistols; to the pistols given him by Reginald, which destroyed his assailants; or to his faithful horse, whose docility and attachment enabled him finally to escape unscathed from his enemies. Deeply sorry as his one time victim was to hear of Rufford's unhappy end, he was rejoiced to think that under the providence of God, O'Connor had been able to show to him the revenge of a Christian; while Lorna almost forgot the danger to which her Charlie had been exposed, as she proudly rejoiced over his noble and gallant conduct. It seemed to her as though, after so wonderful a deliverance, the diamond must really be a talisman; and so it was, but not from natural causes, and not from any special talismanic properties in the stone itself. But, nevertheless, each month as it went by, notwithstanding all her efforts, seemed longer than the last; and the harrowing descriptions

which arrived of the fearful inroads made in that gallant army during the following winter by disease, and the want of things which in that climate were necessities of life, made her dread that her lover's cheerfulness was not real, but assumed for her sake. 'Tis true that she went about her duties much the same as usual, but her cheek grew paler, her foot slower, and her brow more thoughtful. But with the return of spring, and more favourable accounts from the Crimea, as the birds began to warble in the hedges, and the heart-moving hymn of the lark was heard from the sky, Lorna's song sounded again about the house, although the note was lower, and the tune of not quite so lively a character as formerly.

CHAPTER XV.

It was towards the end of the August of the following year that a yacht, with her helm pointing to the East, might have been observed by the indolent inhabitants seated in the verandahs, or peering through the lattices of the numerous kiosks and palaces which stud her shores, making her way through the waters of the sea of Marmora. A young man, who by his dress and appearance seemed to be of higher rank than his companions, a powerfully built Englishman, and an equally strongly made negro, and two other young men, who, from their absurd likeness to one another, were evidently brothers, the elder of whom was steering the vessel, comprised her crew. They were all on deck, but few words

passed between them. They were engaged, either in attending to the directions of the captain at the helm—for owing to the direction of the wind, and the narrowness of the channel, they were frequently compelled to alter the course of the vessel—or in watching the many novel scenes around, new at least to most of them—the varied and beautiful scenery of the shores of Europe and Asia on either hand, sometimes nearer, at other times further off, according to the direction of the vessel, or the constantly altering breadth of the channel; the shifting scenes upon the shore, the succession of hill and dale, of green woods and green pasture, of garden and pleasure grounds, of mansion and village; the thickly packed shoals of fish, which were playing around the yacht, easily visible in the clear blue stream, moving swiftly towards the Archipelago; the picturesque caiques that were constantly darting across from shore to shore, conveying their phlegmatic owners apparently oblivious of everything under the

narcotic influence of the chibouques they were smoking; and then the numerous flights of birds, hawks and eagles, and other and unknown inhabitants of the air which were flying above and around them.

During the afternoon they passed the city named after the first of the Eastern Cæsars, where, terrace upon terrace, crowned by the numerous minarets of S. Sophia, the capital of the Sultan, long coveted by the Czar, rises from the sea shore in majestic, and in some respects unique beauty. Before the night had set in, the good yacht, belonging to the port of Plymouth, was cleaving the waters of the Black Sea, and her head was pointing towards Sebastopol. The day had been fine, indeed scorching hot, but as the sun set, the Pontus Euxinus gave the mariners the first taste of its quality; for a thick mist set in which quickly rendered everything invisible, though but a few yards off.

The name of the yacht was "The Peri," which had been lately purchased by Reginald

A'Bear ; and her crew consisted, besides the owner, of a son of old Nix Jarvis, by name Reuben Jarvis, a smart mate of one of the Salcombe clippers, who had charge of the yacht ; his younger brother, Harry ; the negro, Horatio Nanton, who had landed at Salcombe just in time to make one of the crew ; and long Bob, a well known sailor, from the port of Plymouth. Reginald had passed through Oxford, if not with high honours, at any rate with credit, and immediately after he had taken his degree in June, had purchased the yacht ; and as soon as he had gathered the crew together, and laden her with everything he could think of that might be of use in the Crimea, had sailed from Plymouth, intending as soon as he had returned, to offer himself for ordination at the ensuing Christmas. Although he had not forgotten what had once been the nature of his feelings towards Lorna—for forgetfulness in such matters comes not in a day, nor in a year—they had gradually subsided, and he could now contemplate her

marriage with O'Connor without a pang. Edric Maitland, lately elected a fellow of his college, had been for some months one of the masters of Malborough, and hoped before long to have a school of his own, and to be able to call Winny his wife. Hugh A'Bear was studying hard for the Bar, in London. Gertrude Sinclair was staying for a time at Burrscombe, and with Lorna, had assisted Reginald in the choice of articles for the victualling of "The Peri;" and as they had sat together on a seat, near the hill-top, in the grounds of Mount Edgecumbe, and watched "The Peri," now minished to a speck on the horizon, Lorna had put her arm through Gerty's, and said—

"We shall be greater friends than ever now."

"Why?" asked Gerty, simply, still gazing earnestly seaward.

"Because we shall have another bond of sympathy between us; our hearts will both be in the East."

Gerty, who never took her eyes off the yacht, only answered with a shake of the head.

"It is of no use to shake your head," asserted her friend, "you forget that I have been through it all myself, and know the symptoms."

"I do not shake my head," she replied, blushing, "because I deny it; but because I feel that my love will never be returned. I have been fond of Reggie ever since I was quite a little girl; when every one else, and Hugh especially, used to treat me as though I had not a grain of wisdom, and appeared to think me a silly little thing not worth noticing, he was always kind, and I used to like to walk with him, because he talked as if I had some sense in my head. And then came the day when he saved my life at the risk of his own, and ever since then I have known too well that I love him as I can never love any one else. It seems a little hard to bear sometimes," she continued with a sigh; "for it never seems to enter Reggie's head that I love him any differently to what I did when I was a little girl of twelve years old."

As she uttered the last words, she looked down. When she raised her head again the moment afterwards, "The Peri" had disappeared.

As Lorna put her arm round Gerty's neck, and affectionately kissed her, she said—"Gerty, darling, you must not despond, it will all come right in the end; I have a feeling that it will."

"No," she answered, wiping away the rising tears, and restraining them from overflowing with an effort, "I have quite made up my mind to be an old maid, I think an old maid in a family is a very useful personage, and I don't think that I shall be a very unhappy one either."

"Don't talk nonsense, Gerty; fancy a girl of your age saying she has made up her mind to be an old maid."

"But it is not nonsense," she replied; when Reggie gave me a kiss just now, the first he has given me since I was a little girl, he little knew how it made me tremble. But

his was just a brother's kiss, no more ; he has always looked upon me as his little sister, and I shall never be anything else to him."

Lorna thought how strange it was that Reginald should be as oblivious of the nature of Gertrude's feelings towards him, as she had once been of the nature of his feelings towards her, but answered—"I am not at all so sure of that, wait until he has returned from the Crimea. At the present moment he likes you better than any one else, and some day he will discover that he loves you—yes, I have a sort of feeling that it will all come right in the end."

Gerty hoped that it would ; but had no such feelings of certainty herself.

Before the last day of August had passed away, the yacht had reached her destination, and Reginald found that he had arrived just in time for the final bombardment, as O'Connor who was now attached to one of the besieging batteries assured him that, with the overpowering artillery, and immense supplies

of ammunition now possessed by the allies, the town could not hold out much longer. The meeting between the two friends was most warm and cordial; they both had much to communicate, although O'Connor's duties prevented them from being as much together as they could wish. One of Reginald's first visits was to the sailor's camp, the most likely place, as he was informed, but the most unlikely as he thought, to procure a horse, where among a strange collection of animals he recognised by some peculiar marks Gerard Lisle's favourite "Tchernaya." Who had been his master, or what had been his fate since poor Gerard's death, Reginald was unable to discover. All Jack, who was very reticent on the subject, could or would say, was that he had "comed by him a few days before." He purchased him, however, not without fear that the owner might suddenly appear, and that he might lose horse and money at the same time; but no claimant ever put in an appearance. The only information Richard

Ashfield, whom Reginald was glad to find well and hearty, could give him on the subject was that at the sale of his master's effects "Tchernaya" had been purchased out of the regiment.

Before another week had elapsed the beginning of the end had come, and Reginald, with O'Connor's advice stationed himself early on the morning of the 5th of September in the neighbourhood of Cathcart's Hill to witness the commencement of what promised to be the final bombardment; and there for many an hour that morning he watched the terrible and unintermittent fire which the allies, from their numerous and powerful batteries extending over four miles in length, poured into the devoted city. To one unaccustomed to such sights it was a strangely fascinating though cruel scene. He watched the flames, unceasing, horrible, bursting forth from the besieged city and the lines of the besiegers, now in single jets, but more frequently in broad sheets of lightning; then, again, gyrating in

the air, crossing and recrossing one another in dire confusion ; and over all the thick and fleecy clouds of smoke curling upwards and floating as a veil of death over the devoted city, the fœtid breath of the murderous cannon, like the sulphurous vapour of a volcano, suddenly burst into activity. And as he watched he was reminded of that scene in "Paradise Lost," where Milton, taking the idea, perhaps, from Spencer, makes Satan in consequence of his defeat to have invented "his devilish enginery," and to have poured upon the angelic host the "rattling storm of arrows barbed with fire ;" and carried away by the novelty of the scene and the excitement of the moment, he could almost have expected to have suddenly seen

"From their foundations loosened to and fro
The seated hills plucked up, with all their load—
Rocks, waters, woods ; and, by the shaggy tops
Uplifted, borne in angel hand. To have seen
The bottom of the mountains upward turned
And on those cursed engines triple row
Have seen them whelmed, and all their confidence
Under the weight of mountains buried deep."

The sight, however, of an old campaigner

quietly sitting at his tent door cooking his breakfast over a camp fire, altogether heedless of the sight which had so affected him, brought him to his senses.

For three days, morning, noon, and night, that overpowering hail of shot and shell continued without a moment's intermission, and long before that time had come the novelty of the sight had in a measure died away. On the eve of the final assault Reginald slept in O'Connor's hut, and before retiring to rest they listened to the songs which resounded on all sides from the groups of men scattered around them. "Annie Laurie" seemed the great favourite, and at one time far and near from every part of the camp there sounded the strains of that popular air. The men did not know at the time, although their officers did, of the desperate assault to be made on the morrow; and it was sad to feel that many of them would never see their Annie Lauries again. The very vigour which the men threw into their music, and the sounds of merriment

around, had a depressing effect under the circumstances, and O'Connor, though he tried to shake off the feeling, felt it more than he would like to have owned.

It might be fancy, but the diamond seemed to shine less brightly than usual. Was he then after all, having passed unscathed through so many dangers, to fall at last? Reginald noticed that something was amiss with his friend, and understanding somewhat of the cause, told him again of Lorna's faith and hope, and the certainty with which she had spoken of his return and their happy reunion. His friend's words had their desired effect, and O'Connor's momentary depression passed away.

On the following day, as the news of the coming assault spread, Reginald found himself being gradually surrounded on the knoll upon which he had taken his station by a motley group of spectators. On either side of him were Long Bob and Sambo, who looked like giants among the dirty but amusing spe-

cimens of turbaned humanity around them, upon whom Long Bob was gazing with a look of ineffable contempt—Jews, Turks, Tartars, who appeared for the nonce to have thrown away their habitual or assumed *nonchalance*; while the environs of Balaclava seemed to have disgorged itself of its *omnium gatherum* of the rascality of Europe, Asia, and Africa—camel drivers, porters, labourers, and vendors of various commodities clad in many-coloured raiment. Among this confused crowd, whose very tongues were a manifest proof of the confusion wrought by the building of the Tower of Babel, Reginald noticed some brother yachtsmen clothed in the eccentric garments affected by Young England, seamen from the merchant shipping, and an occasional British navy from the Balaclava railway works, watching anxiously for the commencement of the attack, the sight of the French swarming from their trenches up the front of the battered Malakhoff. The numbers, however, collected in the vicinity of the knoll attracted the attention of the Russians, and some heavy

shot and shell which passed harmlessly over their heads warned the spectators to move to some safer watching place. At last the moment long waited for arrived ; at five minutes to twelve the assault commenced, and before the clock could have struck, the tricolour was waving from the summit of the long coveted Malakhoff, the signal for the assault of the British forces upon the Redan. But it was not Reginald's fate to witness the brave but unavailing valour of his countrymen; he had seen his last of that day's battle; for as he was leaving the knoll, rendered dangerous to spectators by the scattering fragments of some of the Russian shells, he observed a cacholet or mule litter coming towards him. As it came nearer he perceived that it contained a wounded artillery officer from one of the batteries in front being taken to the hospital at Balaclava. Before they met, he had been recognized, and the wounded man raised his unharmed hand as if to beckon him. It was O'Connor, wounded at last, and severely in two places.

Early in the morning he had received a flesh wound in the leg, the first scratch since the day he had landed in the Crimea ; his natural pluck, however, would not allow him to retire, until about half an hour afterwards, when a rifle bullet struck him in the elbow, smashing it in a most fearful manner.

"Done for at last, Reggie," he said in a faint voice, "this jolting is killing me, I am bleeding to death."

"Oh, don't say so," his friend exclaimed in as cheery a voice as he could assume, while he supported him in his arms. "Thank God, there is no vital part struck, and you will get round again all right;" but his thoughts belied his words.

He at once spoke to Long Bob, who with Sambo went in search of a litter ; this they shortly procured, and soon O'Connor was lying in greater comfort on the litter, with his head on the waterman's coat rolled up for a pillow, swung between those two strong men ; while Reginald, having bound up the wound afresh with fragments of his own

underclothing, was either walking by his side, or occasionally taking his turn with the litter.

It was fortunate for O'Connor that he had been wounded in the early part of the day, as the hospitals, in expectation of the numbers who would be sure to arrive there during the day, had been almost cleared of their occupants, and the surgeons were in waiting and could give their almost undivided attention to him. The flesh wound in the muscular part of the thigh, though deep, was soon sewn up and put to rights; and after a short consultation, the senior surgeon present came and informed O'Connor that it would be necessary to amputate his arm.

"Is it absolutely necessary?" asked the wounded man, who had wonderfully revived, when he found that his wounds were not so dangerous as he had anticipated. "One does not like to lose a limb if one can help it. What will a hunting-man do without his left arm."

"I fear it must come off," he replied.

"I would sooner bear any torture than

lose it. You see," he said, " I have promised never to take that ring off my finger, and if you take off my arm, what am I to do ? "

" Why, we must take it off without your consent, and put it on to the other hand."

One of the younger surgeons then came forward and proposed that by cutting out the wounded joint, and joining the bones above and below the elbow, the arm might be saved ; although of course it would be for ever stiff, and much shorter than the other. The wound was probed and examined again, not without considerable suffering to the patient, who, however, jumped at the proposal (mentally of course, for any other jumping was out of the question with a wounded leg); and eventually they determined to try the experiment, the operation being left to the young surgeon who had proposed the plan.

The difficult operation was performed successfully, the patient being of course under chloroform ; and, as soon as it was all over, the young surgeon, turning to Reginald A'Bear, said—

“We should not have dared to try the experiment on every one, but your friend is a good subject for an operation, no superfluous flesh about him. All he will want now will be careful nursing, and he will soon be walking about as well as ever, minus an elbow.” And he then indulged in a digression on the prognosis and diagnosis of the matter, which was altogether Sanscrit to his hearer.

As soon as he had ceased, Reginald at once proposed that the wounded man should be moved to his yacht, saying that he had in former days served a long apprenticeship to nursing; and when their master had received some necessary directions from the surgeon, Sambo and Long Bob again took up the litter between them, and before long, Charlie O'Connor was lying, as comfortable as possible under the circumstances, in the cabin of “The Peri,” with his old friend Reginald by his side, ready to anticipate his every wish.

As soon as they had deposited their burden, Long Bob, said—

“Me and Sambo thinks as how us can do

no more good here, and perhaps there may be some more poor fellows up yonder who will be glad of this here litter, so if you've no objection we'll just go back, and see if us can't find something to do. I thinks as how it will be something to tell Sally when us gets home again."

His master for the time-being readily consented; and all that day, and far into the night, and the greater part of the next day, those two men, without any thought of payment, here or hereafter, carried that litter between them, doing the work of good Samaritans; and when at length they reached the yacht, though both unusually strong and powerful men and accustomed to fatigue, so exhausted were they with their labours that they hardly moved an arm or stirred a limb for six-and-thirty hours afterwards.



